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Peter Wollen: 'Ontology' and 'Materialism' in Film
Scripts by Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet:
'History Lessons' and 'Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's
Accompaniment to a Cinematograph Scene'

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Editorial

In 'Notes on Columbia Pictures Corporation 1926-41' (*Screen* v 16 n 3, Autumn 1975), Edward Buscombe pointed out the disjunction between studies of film as an art and studies of the cinema as an industry. Two articles in this number take up related issues. J Douglas Gomery, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, argues that there are rich sources of historical data on the film industry in court records; he uses some of this data to provide a picture of the financing of an American film company in the 1920's which overthrows many received truths of film history, but also argues that aesthetic as well as economic hypotheses about the cinema can be examined in its light. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, reviewing *Screen Education* 17, notes that while in appearance the so-called 'author-structuralist' theory allows a film like *The Searchers* to be read in terms of meanings produced by its director Ford as 'code' whereas the industrial determinants are not 'meaningful' in this sense, in fact, while films (rather, film viewings) are commodities, they are commodities of a special type, and that specialness, which has so far been observed rather than theorised, but relates to the fact that these commodities are artistic commodities, is also not unconnected with the characteristics of art works in capitalist-dominated social formations which require attribution of authorship as part of the consumption process. This suggests an avenue of investigation of film and cinema that may overcome Buscombe's disjunction.

In a recent special number of *Studio International* on film (190, n 978, 1975), P  ter Gidal attacks *Screen* on the grounds that, while he shares many of our theoretical concerns, he finds it incomprehensible that we should be using these theoretical tools for the analysis of traditional narrative-representational films like *Touch of Evil*. We do not publish studies of such films to celebrate popular forms, but to bring out the contradictions they contain and reveal. However, there is no doubt that *Screen* has neglected the avant-garde film which is Gidal's concern. Peter Wollen's article begins to redress the balance. Drawing on work in *Screen* on Bazin (v 14

6 n 4) and Brecht (v 15 n 2), he shows how similar themes have been taken up by independent film makers and theorists, both in Europe and in North America. However, different uses of the key terms in these discussions reveal two broad trends in film-making which opposes the narrative-representational tradition: a 'modernist' current which expels meaning in the interests of the purely filmic, and a political current which exposes the processes of signification to denaturalise ideology.

Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet are film-makers belonging to this latter current. One of their films screened and discussed at the 1975 Edinburgh Festival Brecht Event was *History Lessons* (*Geschichtsunterricht*; see *Screen* v 16 n 4, esp pp 34-45). The film, made in 1972 and 88 minutes long, has now become available in Britain, distributed by the Artificial Eye Film Company Ltd, for the time being through The Other Cinema. To avoid overloading the spectator, the English sub-titles present only an abbreviated version of the speeches of the film's characters. We are therefore glad to be able to publish a full translation of the scenario of *History Lessons*, for its value as a text in its own right and as an aid to detailed study of the film, but also to help provide an English audience with a fuller understanding of it.* Together with it is the scenario of Straub and Huillet's 15-minute *Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's Accompaniment to a Cinematograph Scene*, made in the same year to follow two films commissioned from other film-makers by South-West German TV to 'illustrate' the music Schoenberg wrote for an imaginary film in 1930. Straub and Huillet's film does not illustrate: it seizes the occasion to make a political statement about Schoenberg and the relation between art and politics in twentieth-century capitalism.

Finally, Linda Williams, a student of film at the University of Colorado, shows, in a comparison of two films directed by Alain Resnais, that persistent assertions that the cinema is an art of pure contiguity must be modified in the light of the solidarity of the metonymic and metaphoric poles of any form of discourse.

* It is perhaps worth pointing out, for any reader who is puzzled by the dates in this script, that the events described by the characters in *History Lessons* took place in the first century BC; the dates they give are numbered from the nominal foundation of the city of Rome in 753 BC, but the initial 6 is sometimes omitted (eg 691—63 BC—becomes 91).

' Ontology ' and ' Materialism ' in Film*

Peter Wollen

Since the cinema was invented, theorists have raised the problem of its essence and embarked on the project of an ontology. Foremost among these, of course, was André Bazin, whose collected writings are published under the title *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (four volumes, Paris 1958-62; part translated as *What is Cinema?*, two volumes, Berkeley 1967) – a collection in which the very first essay confronts the question of the ontology of the photographic image. This essay is illustrated by a photograph of the sacred shroud of Turin, an instance of double registration, and it contains numerous analogies, well-known by now, between photography and the moulding of a death-mask, the preservation of a fly in amber, mummification. For Bazin, photography – and by extension cinematography – was a natural process of registration, a process which excluded man and was thus, despite its advanced technology, pre-cultural in some sense or at least a-cultural. 'All the arts are based on the presence of man; in photography alone do we enjoy his absence (*nous jouissons de son absence*). It acts upon us as a "natural" phenomenon, like a flower or a snowflake whose beauty cannot be divorced from its vegetable or telluric origins' (vol I, p 15; this and subsequent references are to the French edition). Cinema was based on a natural automatism which cancelled the irreversibility of time, a rigorous determinism.

This line of argument led Bazin to assert that the ontology of the photographic image was inseparable from the ontology of its model, even that it was identical to it. By natural optical and photochemical processes, the being of the pro-filmic event (the objects within the camera's field of vision) was transferred to the being of the film itself, the image sequence registered and subsequently

* This article was first presented at a symposium on film organised by *Diacritics* at Cornell University in April 1975.

8 projected. Bazin saw the destiny of cinema as the recreation of the world in its own direct image. But this potentiality of the cinema, the potentiality of an 'integral realism', could be put into effect no faster than the pace of technological development permitted. Technological progress was already marked – first, the invention of cinema itself, then the great milestone of sound – and Bazin looked forward to the generalisation of colour and the perfection of 3D. He would certainly have welcomed holography. At the same time, improvement of film-stock and lenses reduced the need for artificial light and made possible an increased depth of field in the image, corresponding, so Bazin thought, to the ubiquitous crispness of natural perception.

'On the other hand, the cinema is a language' (vol I, p 19). What did Bazin mean by this? The presence of language must signify, of course, the passage from nature to culture, the intervention of human agency, the currency of thought. Bazin speaks of the 'language' of cinema as though it was a necessary burden. It is as though the need for language was inflicted on the cinema by its technical inadequacy; it could not be dispensed with yet. On two different occasions, Bazin uses the metaphor of the 'equilibrium-profile' of a river (vol I, p 139). In the early stages of cinema, technical developments bring with them the development of means of expression, figures of language, which are then outmoded and rendered obsolete by new technical developments. Thus, the silent cinema saw the development of 'Russian' montage, the close-up, etc, fundamentally as means of compensating for the absence of sound. The assimilation of sound during the 1930's led eventually to a new situation, an equilibrium-profile, when these figures of language could be dispensed with. Indeed, in the context of other technological improvements – the return of the carbon arc without its hum, the blimped Mitchell with coated lens, high-speed panchromatic stock¹ – not only could these figures be dispensed with, but Bazin could envisage a cinema in which there would be an 'effacement' and 'transparency' of technique and the formal vocabulary associated with it. In this new phase, content would re-assert its primacy over form, and Bazin leaves us in no doubt that this dominance of content is proper and desirable, the suppression at last of a regrettable, though necessary, perversion.

'Language wants to be overlooked.' Siertsema's phrase sums up Bazin's vision of cinema, a cinema whose essence was elsewhere, in the pro-filmic event, and which, because of the automatism of photographic registration, could efface language and render it transparent much more successfully than any other medium. The first generation of great film-makers – the prophets of the Old Testa-

1. See Patrick Ogle: 'Technological and Aesthetic Influences upon the Development of Deep Focus Cinematography in the United States,' *Screen* v 13 n 1, Spring 1972, pp 45-72.

ment, as Bazin saw them – had been fated to be rhetoricians, not 9
because they were committed to formalism or art for art's sake,
but because they could only compensate for a lack, above all the
lack of sound, by adding (and Bazin is very clear that language
is an addition or supplement). Yet even then, there were directors
who anticipated the future – Flaherty, Murnau and Von Stroheim
are the names which Bazin cites most frequently – by reducing the
formal and linguistic surplus as far as conditions would allow. In
their work, 'the absence of a sound-track . . . means something
quite other than the silence of *Caligari*. . . . It is a frustration,
not the foundation of a form of expression' (vol II, p 38).

Bazin's approach to the cinema ran up against two difficult
problems, that of fiction and that of interiority – problems which
the novel seemed much more advanced in solving than the cinema,
and which explain why Bazin still looked to literature as an
exemplary art. Indeed, Bazin saw one path towards the portrayal
of interiority in the use of literary or quasi-literary discourse on
the sound-track, as a complement to the bareness of the image.
He also developed the idea that the close-up could reveal interiority
– the old notion of the face as window on the soul. It is here, of
course, that he displays his Catholic and personalist heritage most
plainly, where his habitual naturalism gives way to an extreme
idealism. It is worth noting too that Bazin allowed the validity of
Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un poète* as a 'documentary on the imagina-
tion' (vol I, p 122); he died in 1958, before the decade of *Last
Year in Marienbad* or *Dog Star Man*, but it is not impossible that
he might have extended the concept of 'integral reality' to include
interiority.

More curious was Bazin's attempt to solve the problem of fiction.
He was led to accept the need for a minimum of montage simply
in order to produce the effect of unreality, yet not enough to
threaten the basic realism of the film. He talks of a 'fringe' or
'margin' of illusion which is necessary to allow a flux and reflux
between the imaginary and the real. It would betray the essence
of the cinema to lose hold of the primacy of the real, but on the
other hand too much reality would expose the artifice on which
fiction must depend. In a phrase which must produce a shock of
recognition in anyone who has read Freud's paper on 'Fetishism'
(*Standard Edition* vol 21), Bazin remarks that it is necessary for
aesthetic fulfillment ('*plénitude esthétique*') that 'we should
believe in the reality of events, while knowing them to be faked'
(vol I, p 124 – Bazin's emphases).

Bazin, as a critic and theorist, was a conservative. If I have
dwelt on his views at some length, it is because the questions
about which he writes also confront theorists with very different
assumptions and conclusions. I am thinking of the problem of the
relationship between an ontology of cinema – albeit perhaps a
materialist ontology – and language or semiotic; the problem of

- 10 illusion and anti-illusion; the historic problem of the impact of sound. It is on the first of these particularly that I want to concentrate – it was a problem central to Bazin's whole system of thought, while other issues were seen by him as subsidiary or derivative. It is also a problem which, whether openly stated or not, underlies the theory and practice of every theorist and filmmaker. Bazin's great merit was to make this manifest and concentrate his attention and characteristic subtlety of mind upon it.

First, ontology. The immediate point we must note is that the concern for ontology has clearly shifted from the mainstream, which Bazin represented, to the avant-garde. Shortly after winning the prize at Knokke in 1968, Michael Snow was asked by the editors of *Cinim* in England, 'Why Wavelength?' He replied:

'Critical moment in my life and/or art. Light and sound waves. Limits of hear and see. . . . "A time monument." A pun on the room-length zoom to the photo waves (sea), through the light waves and on the sound waves. Electricity. Ontology. "A definitive statement of pure film space and time. . . ." "A summary of my nervous system, religious inklings and aesthetic ideas "' (*Cinim*, 3, 1969, p 3).

Various ideas emerge from this reply – the aspiration to pure cinema, in contrast to Bazin's advocacy of an 'impure' cinema; the lingering idealism, which Snow expresses elsewhere by comparing his film to psycho-tropic drugs;² the characteristic post-Duchampian taste for puns. But it is on the word 'Ontology' that I want to concentrate attention. The theme is taken up by P Adams Sitney in 'Michael Snow's Cinema', *Michael Snow/A Survey* (Art Gallery of Ontario, 1970), p 83: 'Snow has intuitively discovered an image, in almost every one of his films, capable of evoking the metaphysical notion of categories of being.' He goes on to quote Ortega y Gasset on the crux of modernism as 'the drive to give works of art the integrity of objects, and to liberate them from the burden of human mimesis.' The irony must strike the reader familiar with Bazin's work – it is mimesis itself which is now associated with the burdensome intervention of the 'human', the cultural, as the work of art is returned to the integral objecthood of nature, existing as pure being.

This line of thought, barely alluded to by Snow, toyed with by Sitney, who remains in the last resort wedded to a very traditional Romanticism, is taken up in a different context and elaborated more coherently by Regina Cornwell, writing on 'Some Formalist Tendencies in the Current American Avant-garde Film' in *Studio International* (184, no 948, 1972, pp 110-14; see also *Kansas*

2. 'My films are (to me) attempts to suggest the mind in a certain state or certain states of consciousness. They are drug relatives in that respect,' Michael Snow: 'Letter from Michael Snow to P Adams Sitney and Jonas Mekas,' *Film Culture* 46, 1967, pp 4-5.

Quarterly, 4, no 2, 1972, pp 60-70). Cornwell also talks about ontology: 'These works are concerned with the ontology, materials and processes of film itself.' But Cornwell develops her position in the context of art history, rather than general aesthetics. She cites Greenberg – 'It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique in the nature of its medium'; and further, 'realistic, naturalistic art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art; modernist art used art to call attention to art' ('Modernist Painting,' *Arts Yearbook*, 4, 1961, p 103). Her purpose, following Greenberg, is to relate the ontology of film as a concern to reflexive film, film about film, its own processes and structures. Film thus becomes an investigation and demonstration of its own properties – an epistemological and didactic enterprise. As such it is located within the history of Greenberg and post-Greenberg 'modernism'.

A similar 'modernist' position is developed by Annette Michelson. I cite her 'Paul Sharits and the Critique of Illusionism: An Introduction,' written to accompany new projection work by Sharits, exhibited at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (*Projected Images*, Walker Art Center, 1974, pp 22-5). Writing about 'the best of recent current work' in the American avant-garde, Michelson affirms that 'the ontology of film is their' collective concern'. She traces the origin of this concern back to Brakhage:

'Brakhage's insistence upon the materiality of the filmic support, the filmic filtering of light, his revision of sound-image relation, his subversion of the space in which narrative takes place, initiates the development of that detailed critique of illusionism which marks the passage from *cinema* to *film*.'

(Michelson is drawing here on a distinction made by Hollis Frampton in 'For a metahistory of film: commonplace notes and hypotheses' in the Special Film Issue of *Artforum* of September 1971, edited by Michelson herself – 'From now on we will call our art simply: *film*.') I should also add that Michelson goes on, in the next paragraph, to write about Olitski, thus recalling again the Greenbergian parallel to her own thought about modernism in film.

From 'What is cinema?' to 'the ontology of film': we have passed from an ontology basing itself on the possibility, inherent in the photo-chemical process, of reproducing natural objects and events without human intervention, to the conscious exploration of the full range of properties of the photo-chemical process, and other processes involved in film-making, in the interest of combating, or at least setting up an alternative to, the cinema of reproduction or representation, mimesis or illusion. And this passage, this displacement of the notion of 'ontology' on to a quite different terrain, is set within the rift between modernism and traditionalism which marked all the arts during the first decades of this century, though it was in painting and music that this rift went

- 12 deepest, in comparison to literature and cinema. So this displacement is also marked by a shift in the perspective of comparison between cinema and the other arts.

There are some further points which must be made. Both Cornwell and Michelson mention the 'materials' of film itself, the 'materiality' of the filmic support. Michelson relates this interest in 'materiality' (historically determined by the specific mode and relations of production within the independent film sector – the necessary interest of the artisan or craftsman in his materials and tools, asserted as an end in itself in the face of competition from large-scale capitalist industry) to the Ford model, dedicated to the mass production for profit of illusionist cinema. Thus the search for an ontology can itself be displaced from the field of idealism – Sitney's metaphysical modes of being, evoked as theologically as anything is by Bazin – to the field of materialism. Indeed, this possibility has been taken up polemically by the film-maker and theorist, Peter Gidal, in his partisanship for 'structural/materialist film' against the backsliding of others into idealist illusionism and romanticism (see his 'Definition and Theory of the Current Avant-garde: Materialist/Structuralist Film,' *Studio International*, 187, no 963, 1974, pp 53-6 and 'Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film,' *Studio International*, 190, no 978, 1975, pp 189-96).

Michelson herself is well aware that by talking of 'materiality' in this way, she is necessarily entering another debate. As she puts it, there is 'a larger crisis, international in scope, inter-disciplinary and transformatal' whose effects are felt not only in the American avant-garde but in the 'post-Brechtian aesthetic of European . . . cinema' (p 25). The attempt to build a 'materialist' cinema has been the cornerstone of the post-1968 films of Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga-Vertov group (Michelson too has written at length on Vertov) and others such as Jean-Marie Straub are also concerned with the materiality of film: 'Art-house distributors haven't yet understood that the cinema is a very material art, even a materialist art,' Straub once said,³ talking about quality of projection, and one could find many such remarks, particularly on the subject of sound. Yet there is a chance of confusion here, because the sense of 'materialism' used by Godard, following Brecht, and the defenders of Godard or of Straub and Huillet, is somewhat different from the sense of materialism as used here by Straub himself, which is indeed closer to the concern with 'materiality' about which Michelson is writing. We sense this chance of confusion too in Gidal's writings, where the two senses of materialism are often juxtaposed. In his films and theoretical

3. Discussion between Jean-Marie Straub, Glauber Rocha, Miklos Jancso and Pierre Clementi, arranged by Simon Hartog and filmed in Rome, February 1970. Tape published under the title 'The Industry and European New Cinema' in *Cinemantics* n 3, July 1970.

work he has taken care to avoid any suggestion that materialism 13 could be reduced simply to the representation or documenting, mapping, etc. of the material process or substance of film, or that representation could ever be entirely eliminated. His aim has been to produce films which are materialist precisely because they 'present' rather than reflexively 'represent' their own process or substance. The pro-filmic event is not film itself; the work is not an illustration or record of its own making, but is constructed in such a way that it must be perceived primarily as an end-product brought into being by procedures (bringing into focus, bringing into frame, etc) which have no extrinsic finality, which are means to no end other than that of producing a film as such. His aim is to construct an 'anti-illusionist' aesthetic for a medium which is 'illusionist' by nature (an anti-ontology, so to speak) and a materialism which can be interpreted as dialectical rather than mechanical. The representational content of the work – his own room, for instance, as in *Room Film* – is posited as a necessary but not significant residue. It is here, of course, that Gidal's sense of materialism differs crucially from any post-Brechtian sense of materialism, which must be concerned with the significance of what is represented, itself located in the material world and in history.

Brecht saw his theatre as essentially materialist in its political content and in its psychological effect, its role in a struggle against an Aristotelian theatre based on empathy, projection and introjection. For Godard and the Dziga-Vertov group, Brecht was a great forerunner whose work they read in a specific context:⁴ Althusser's insistence on a materialist reading of Marx; Lacan's critique of neo-Freudianism and ego-psychology; the journal *Tel Quel* and its development of a theory of the text, a semiotic based on the material character of the signifier and the practice of writing as a subversion of conventional codes, especially those of representation, and a 'de-structuration' of the conscious (ie self-conscious) subject in favour of a subject fissured and split by articulation with the order of the unconscious and his or her own body. Thus the somewhat simple Brechtian concept of materialism in the theatre was translated to the cinema in terms of a re-reading and re-formulation (re-writing) which presumed a more sophisticated conceptual apparatus, to the point of being arcane.

It is now that we must return to Bazin's observation: 'On the other hand, the cinema is a language.' Or is it? The same period which has seen the shift in the concept of ontology discussed above, has also seen the startling development of a semiology.

4. For Godard's ideas during the crucial period of the late 1960's, see *Kinopraxis* n0 (sic), published by Jack Flash, 'who may be reached at 2533 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley,' 'under a rubric dating to May '68,' but, in fact, 1970. This broadside contains a collection of interviews given by Godard.

- 14 associated above all with the work of Christian Metz (see especially *Language and Cinema*, The Hague 1973). Metz's principal achievement to date has been to establish that cinema is a multi-channel and multi-code system. These codes may have different types of status – there are those, like that of verbal language itself, which though components of the overall system of film, are nonetheless non-cinematic, in that they have an independent existence of their own, outside and frequently preceding the invention of the cinema. Alongside these are the specifically cinematic codes of camera movement, editing, etc. The non-cinematic codes, we should note, are at work in the pro-filmic event and are inscribed into the discourse of film by the process of photographic reproduction, itself an iconic code or code of analogy, based on recognition. (The non-cinematic codes may be modified or altered to some extent due to their inscription within the film-text: thus the gestural code acquires a specifically filmic 'dialectal' form, different from that of everyday life or the theatre.)

We can now re-approach the question of 'modernism' in film. There are two tendencies here. First, the muting or exclusion of the non-cinematic codes – those of music, verbal language, gesture, facial expression, narrative, etc. This is in line with the aim of developing a 'pure' cinema, in which principally (or only) the cinematic codes would be at work. Second, the reduction of these codes themselves to their material – optical, photo-chemical – substrate ('material support') to the exclusion of any semantic dimension other than reference-back to the material of the signifier itself, which thus becomes its own unique field of signification. This involves the negation of reproduction as the aim of the photographic process, because the fact of reproduction introduces necessarily an extrinsic signified – the event/object photographed/reproduced – or at least, if not a signified in the strict sense, a referent or *denotatum*. Put another way: light is no longer seen as the means by which the pro-filmic event is registered on film, but as the pro-filmic event itself, and at the same time part of the material process of film itself, as transmitted through the lens and indeed the strip of celluloid in the projector – so that the strip can be seen as the medium for the transmission (and absorption) of light, the basic raw material.

The most extended discussion of these tendencies, in relation to both the concept of ontology and that of language, is to be found in Paul Sharits:

'When Bazin asks "What is cinema?" he answers by describing the interesting ways in which cinema has been *used* to tell stories, enlarge upon theatre, cinematise "human themes". If we dispense with such non-filmic answers, do we have anything left? I believe that we can turn away from the cinema which began with Lumière (using cinema to create illusions of non-film movement),

and which developed through Méliès, Griffith, Eisenstein, and so on, 15
up to today's Bergman, Fellini, etc, and we can ask a new set of
questions which greatly expand the possibilities of the system'
(' Words per Page,' *Afterimage* 4, Autumn 1972, pp 26-42).

This return of Sharits to Bazin's ontological question, in order to answer it in a completely different sense, follows immediately after a discussion of the achievement of 'objecthood' in non-objective art, primarily through 'intensification of materiality' but through serial systems as well, characteristic of Sharits's own films of course, also reminiscent here of Fried's observations on seriality in the work of his favoured 'Three American Painters' – Noland, Stella, Olitski ('Introduction,' *Three American Painters*, Fogg Art Museum, 1965, pp 3-53). Indeed, this section of Sharits's paper ends with an evocation of Stella as exemplar of "self-reference", through formal tautology'.

Sharits does not exclude iconic reference totally – though he has done so in individual pieces of work – because recording or registration is 'a physical fact' intrinsic to film, unlike this aspect of painting. Indeed, Sharits sees in the dual nature of film (recording process and optical/material process) a 'problematic equivocality of film's "being"' which is 'perhaps cinema's most basic ontological issue'. Thus he comments on the problem posed by Landow's *Film in which there appear sprocket holes, edge lettering, dirt particles, etc*, where both images/registrations of dirt particles appear and actual dirt particles on the particular film-strip being projected. Snow makes a very similar point when he compares his interest in *Wavelength* to that of Cézanne, in exploring the tension between 'painterly', two-dimensional surface and three-dimensional 'space', or effect of space, produced upon it ('Letter', op cit, p 5). This, too, is a milestone in the Greenberg-Fried view of art history.

When Sharits comes to language and linguistics (he posits a new field of 'cinematics', more or less equivalent to what is now known as semiology or semiotics of film) his main concern is to look for units below the level of the shot, corresponding therefore to phonemes rather than morphemes. His interest is in phonology rather than syntax – the division of the stream of air, the continuous 'sound wave emanating from the mouth of a speaker' into discrete units or modules. Hence he concentrates his attention on the frame rather than the shot – which, as he analyses it, is a distinct physical as well as linguistic unit. The problem which Sharits is touching on here is that of 'double articulation'. Verbal language is articulated on two levels, one of which – the phonological – underlies the other. Semiologists are divided over the question of the number of articulations to be attributed to film and also over how, and if, they form a hierarchy. Sharits develops the idea that the most fruitful research procedure lies in making

16 films which are indeed, in the strict sense of the word, experimental. Such films, made by 'researchers', would produce information about their own 'linguistic' ('cinematic') structure. Thus the self-referential film is a tool of inquiry into the problems of film language and film being, united at the level of the minimal unit.

It is hard to see here how language or semiotic can be differentiated from ontology except in the sense that vocal sound can be differentiated from language. Vocal sound – the production of sound waves through the action of various parts of the human body (vocal or speech organs) on a stream of air passing through from the lungs – is the material substrate of verbal language, without which language could not exist (perhaps one should add, or without an equivalent material substrate, as with American Sign Language or writing, which rely on bodily movement, a stream of ink, etc). Sounds clearly exist which do not form part of verbal language – grunts, sobs, coughs, moans – but which may nonetheless be expressive and fall within the field of semiology as paralinguistic phenomena. They form too a dimension of what Julia Kristeva, in *La Révolution du langage poétique*, Paris 1974, calls the semiotic *chora*, the pre-linguistic, or pre-symbolic, means of expression which are not dependent on the thetic act by which a subject of discourse is created.

What interests Sharits is the way in which a protocol can be devised to structure this material substrate – a serial system or calculus, perhaps a random system – so that the structuring is no longer dependent on a higher level of organisation. Thus in Burroughs' cut-up method, letters are no longer organised into words, words are no longer organised into sentences.⁵ Similarly, frames need no longer be organised into shots or shots into sequences. Both sentences and sequences, in conventional writing or film-making, are organised in order to convey a determinate meaning. In other words the needs of reference and denotation govern the structuring of all the various levels downwards. This need in cinema, to capture a likeness of the world, can be dispensed with and consequently new structural protocols introduced. These need not lead to meaninglessness because a principle of 'self-referentiality' is introduced, so that film is about itself and its own structure. Film, because of its 'duality of being', can be both an autonomous object and also its own representation – thus ontology and semiology can coincide (Sharits, *op cit*, p 32).

In fact, Sharits wavers between two concepts of representation – first-order mimeticism = conventional iconic reference; second-order mimeticism = multiple mapping procedure, as in the Landow example mentioned above, or else a method of drawing

5. See Brion Gysin: *Brion Gysin Let the Mice in*, Something Else Press, West Glover Vt 1973, and William Burroughs and Brion Gysin: *The Exterminator*, Auerhahn Press, 1960.

attention to cinematic phenomena which are normally meant to be overlooked. Thus he cites Brakhage for his use of "mistakes" (blurs, splices, flares, flash frames, frame lines, etc). This, in fact, functions not so much as a multiple mapping effect, but as what linguists, in the terminology of the Prague School (see Paul L Garvin, ed: *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, Georgetown 1964), have called 'foregrounding'. The Landow film uses the film strip itself, as added to and altered by the process of projection (accumulation of dirt particles), as the pro-filmic object/event for another film. Brakhage is merely retaining – in the case of blurs and flash frames – elements of the film which would normally be discarded. He thus makes us aware of the material substrate by not removing instances which have no iconic reference and would hence normally be suppressed: in fact, he deliberately foregrounds them. 17

Cornwell makes a very similar point when, writing about Gehr's use of grain (cf as well Sharits's *Axiomatic Granularity*), she points out how normally we become conscious of grain only as a short-coming to be overlooked if possible, otherwise a distraction, as when a fiction film shot in 16 mm is blown up to 35 mm. She gives as another example the use of scratches in Sharits's *S:TREAM:S:S:ECTION:S:SECTION:S:S:SECTIONED*, contrasted with the need to overlook scratches, if possible, during the projection of a conventional movie ('Formalist Tendencies,' op cit, p 111). Sharits himself is explicit about the structural possibilities of what are normally considered flaws or errors, bungled actions. These are the points at which what was not intended reveals what it is possible to intend. Of course, whereas Sharits sees these flaws simply as the interruption of a lower-level system into the higher, they could also be interpreted as instances of symbolic displacement.

Brakhage himself is quite clear about one at least of the purposes of this type of foregrounding: 'The splice, that black bar breaking two kinds of white, operating aesthetically as a kind of kickback or kick spectator out of escapist wrap-up or reminder (as are flares, scratches, etc in my films) of the artifice, the art' ('A Moving Picture Giving and Taking Book,' *Film Culture*, 41, Summer 1966, pp 47-8). This passage, with its surprisingly Brechtian ring, couched though it is in a very different rhetoric from Brecht's, reminds us of the de-mystificatory role that foregrounding can play, breaking processes of imaginary involvement. But at the same time it should also serve as a warning. In almost every other respect, Brakhage is clearly the polar opposite of Brecht. His conception of the artist, his world-view, is one of unmitigated idealism. For Brecht, of course, the point of the *Verfremdung*-effect was not simply to break the spectator's involvement and empathy in order to draw attention to the artifice of art, ie, an art-centred model, but in order to demonstrate the workings of society, a reality obscured

- 18 by habitual norms of perception, by habitual modes of identification with 'human problems'. Nor indeed was this reality one accessible to the power of inner vision; it had to be approached and expounded scientifically. For Brecht, knowledge always took precedence over imagination.

There was no question then for Brecht of abandoning the whole realm of reference outside the play (or film – though only *Kuhle Wampe*, a marginal and collaborative work, exists to indicate the way Brecht might have thought the issues through in terms of cinema). He did not equate anti-illusionism with suppression of any signified except a tautological signified. Nor of course do the Godard/Dziga-Vertov Group or Straub-Huillet. If there is something in common between 'structural' or 'modernist' film and the 'post-Brechtian aesthetic' of which Michelson writes, it consists neither of the movement toward 'objecthood' and exclusive self-referentiality, nor in the simple act of foregrounding the material substrate. This 'post-Brechtian aesthetic' is not postulated on the search for an ontology, albeit a materialist ontology. It has to be approached from the side of language, here dialectic.

Brecht's objection to the traditional bourgeois theatre was that it provided a substitute for life – a simulated experience, in the realm of the imaginary, of the life of another person, or other people. In its stead, he actually wanted a representation – a picture, a diagram, a demonstration: he uses all these words⁶ – to which the spectator remained external and through which he/she acquired knowledge about (not gained experience of) the society in which he/she, himself/herself lived (not the life of another/others). Brecht's anti-illusionism then should be seen not as anti-representationalism (Brecht thought of himself as a 'realist') but, so to speak, as anti-substitutionism. A representation, however, was not simply a likeness or resemblance to the appearance of its object/referent; on the contrary, it represented its essence, precisely what did not appear at first sight. Thus a gap of space had to be opened up within the realm of perception – a gap whose significance Brecht attempted to pinpoint with his concept of 'distanciation'.

It is here that the concept of 'text' must be introduced – a concept developed in the same intellectual milieu which, as noted, determined the reading of Brecht by Godard and others.⁷ Brecht wanted to find a concept of 'representation' which would account for a passage from perception/recognition to knowledge/under-

6. For instance, Brecht talks about epic theatre as 'picture of the world' in the notes to *Mahagonny*, and of plays as 'representations' in the *Short Organum*.

7. The concept of 'text' is developed especially in the writings of the *Tel Quel* group. See, for instance, Philippe Sollers: 'Niveaux sémantiques d'un texte moderne' in *Théorie d'ensemble*, Paris 1968, pp 317-25.

standing, from the imaginary to the symbolic: a theatre of representation, mimesis even, but also a theatre of ideas. Moreover, one of the lessons to be learned from this didactic theatre, this theatre of ideas, arguments, judgements, was precisely that ideas cannot be divorced from their material substrate, that they have material determinations, that 'social being determines thought' as the classic formula (deriving from Marx's *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*) puts it. Brecht, of course, was a militant materialist, in the political (Leninist) sense. 19

Ideas, therefore language: it is only with a symbolic (rather than iconic) system that concepts can be developed, that there can be contradiction and hence argument. Yet at the same time ideas which were not simply conveyed or communicated through signifiers which could be overlooked, which could be effectively dematerialised by the sovereign processes of thought. A work, therefore, which recognised the primacy of the signifier in the process of signification. This would not involve the reduction of the signifier purely to the material substrate, a semiotic of pure presentation, nor the mere interruption of a stream, a continuum of signifieds, by the de-mystificatory break, reminder or caesura of a signifier perceived as an interruption, a discontinuity within an over-riding continuity.

A text is structured primarily at the level of the signifier. It is the ordering of the signifiers which determines the production of the signifieds. Normally, moments in which the signifier interrupts discourse are perceived as lapses, errors, mistakes. We should be clear, however, that we are talking now not about 'noise', interruptions or destructions of the process of signification in itself, but of moments in which a mistaken signifier – a metathesis, the displacement of a phoneme – changes meaning, alters or negates the flow of signifieds, diverts, subverts, converts. Whereas Sharits is interested in the re-structuration of noise to provide second-order self-referential information, we are here talking about the production of new – unintended, unanticipated, unconsciously derived – signification from operations carried out on the signifiers. First-order signifiers remain, but they are no longer the sovereign product of the intentional act of a subject, a transcendental ego, the generator of thought which finds embodiment in language as an instrumental necessity for the communication and exchange of ideas between equivalent subjects, alternating as source and receiver.

There is a form of discourse which already corresponds to this concept of the text: poetry – in some sense of the term at least. Poetry has rules which govern the ordering of signifiers independent of the signified: metre, rhyme, etc. Traditionally these are seen as embellishments. Frequently this may be so. Another approach – that of the Russian Formalists, specifically Shklovsky and Jakobson – has been to see them as means by which language is de-

- 20 automatised, its materials and principles of construction (devices) foregrounded, thus renovating our perception and giving the world, which is always in some sense the world of language, new density and freshness. Later Jakobson developed the same line of thought by postulating the poetic function of language as one of self-reference to the message itself.⁸ Here, of course, we are on familiar territory, and it should not surprise us that both Sitney ('The Idea of Morphology,' *Film Culture*, 53/54/55, Spring 1972, p 5) and Cornwell ('Formalist Tendencies,' op cit, p 111) quote Shklovsky, transferring his remarks about literature so as to apply them to film.

However, the concept of text that I am developing here has a different implication. The formal devices of poetry (not purely formal of course, because they involve the sound or graphic material – the substance of expression as well as its form, as Hjelmslev would put it) may in fact produce meaning. These devices, and indeed what is often approached as *style*, are more than supplementary embellishments or even distanciation or self-referential or tautological devices. Style is a producer of meaning – this is the fundamental axiom of a materialist aesthetic. The problem is to develop the efficacy of style beyond that of spontaneous idiosyncrasy or a mere manner of writing, painting or film-making, fundamentally subordinate to the sovereignty of the signified. I am talking about style in the sense in which one would speak of the *style*, the ordering of signifiers, at work in the writing of Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* or James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. (If I were writing in French, I would use the term 'écriture', following Roland Barthes.)⁹

This concept of text does not exclude, indeed is constructed on, the need to produce beyond signifieds, meaning. It sees meaning, however, as a material and formal problem, the product of material and formal determinations rather than the intention of an *ego cogitans*, a thinking and conscious (ie self-conscious) subject. Indeed, the very concept of such a subject is dissolved by textual production in this sense, as Kristeva and others have repeatedly argued. This does not mean, of course, that the conscious subject of ideology is simply replaced by an automatism or by a random process. Rather, it transforms the thinker, or imager, or seer, into an agent who is working with and within language in order to make something which cannot be precisely pre-conceived, which

8. See Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as technique' in Lemon and Reis, eds: *Russian Formalist Criticism*, Lincoln Nebr 1965, pp 5-57, and Roman Jakobson: 'Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics' in Sebeok, ed: *Style in Language*, Cambridge Mass 1960, pp 350-77.

9. Roland Barthes: *-Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, Paris 1953, translated as *Writing Degree Zero*, London 1967. Barthes distinguishes between 'style' and 'écriture' or 'writing', seeing style as a blind force in comparison with a writing marked by intentionality.

must remain problematical and in a sense unfinished, interminable. 21 This manufacture must not suppress its material substrate, the sensuous activity which is its process of production, but nor is that sensuous activity its own horizon.

From this point of view, the 'modernist' non-objective tradition in painting cannot be seen as the exclusive alternative to the bourgeois realism and representationalism which it has ousted. Michelson has pointed out, quite correctly, that both Godard and avant-garde American film-makers have developed a 'critique of cinematic illusionism' and, of course, these two critiques have much in common, but they also differ in certain crucial ways. Illusionism should not be confused with signification. The decisive revolution of twentieth-century art can be seen in the transformation of the concept, and use, of the sign rather than in the rejection of any signification except tautology, the closed circle of presence and self-reference. Anti-illusionism does not even necessarily imply anti-representationalism, which cannot be construed as illusionistic when it is no longer in the service of an alternative creation (the production of an imaginary substitute for the real world). In this respect, the 'multiple mapping procedures' described by Sharits are, like Brecht's plagiarism or Kristeva's 'intertextuality', important anti-illusionist procedures which can produce the transition from the imaginary to the symbolic in the spaces and overlaps of a palimpsest. In this way, the illusory immediacy of 'reading' is destroyed and replaced by a productive deciphering, which must move from level to level, within a volume – rather than following a surface which presents itself as the alterity of a depth, a meaning which lies elsewhere, in the ideal transaction/exchange between consciousnesses, rather than the material text.

To say, however, that the two anti-illusionist currents being discussed are in many respects separate, different from each other, does not mean that they may not be combined. The operations on the signifier which Godard envisages seem limited in the context of American avant-garde cinema – there is an absence of the figures which in 'Structural Film' (*Film Culture Reader*, New York 1970, p 327) Sitney describes as typical of the 'structural' film: fixed frame, flicker, loop printing, re-photography. (Though Godard does use orchestrated back and forth pans, single shots of very long duration, scratching on film, etc.)¹⁰ On the other hand, the American avant-garde has tended to avoid Godard's experiments in the use of verbal language on the soundtrack, till recently at least, and of course there is not nearly the same concern over signification, and its ideological or counter-ideological role. The most radical enterprise of the American avant-garde, as we have seen, has been the

10. See Peter Wollen: 'Counter Cinema: Vent d'Est', *Afterimage* 4, Autumn 1972, pp 6-16, for a more detailed account of Godard's later work.

- 22 exploration of 'voice' rather than 'language', whereas Godard's aim has been to build the elements of a new language, to express a new content. Though different, clearly these two aims *can* be related.¹¹

Finally, I want to return to my starting-point – Bazin. Bazin saw meaning as something transferred into the cinema by the material and hence automatic processes of photographic registration; fundamentally, meaning resided in the pro-filmic event and the aesthetic importance of film was that it could generalise, through the printing process, and make permanent, like a mummy, events and significations which would otherwise be local and lost. Thus his ontology transferred the burden of meaning outside the cinema, to the non-cinematic codes. The 'language' of film would virtually wither away as cinema possessed itself of the integral reality which was its mythic destiny. Language and ontology, essence, were in a kind of inverse relationship.

The modernist current, in complete contrast, has sought to expel the non-cinematic codes, leaving the residue called 'film'. For Bazin, this would imply a complete abandonment of meaning, except the secondary meaning added by the rhetorician, now no longer a pretender, but a usurper. Yet ontology, as we have seen, is re-introduced – through the idea of the objecthood of the film itself, which is also its own signified, through the circular process of self-reflection, self-examination, self-investigation. Film is now directed not towards the 'nature' of the pro-filmic event, but towards the 'nature' of its own material substrate, which may indeed become its own pro-filmic event, through multiple mapping procedures, seen as ontologically inherent in the medium. Again, any heteronomous signification is proscribed.

However, anti-illusionism need not necessarily end up in this kind of tautology, an involution of the illusionist project itself. A reversal of the relations of dominance between non-cinematic and cinematic codes, between signified and signifier, can lead to the production of the film-text, rather than the film-representation or the film-object. Film-making can be a project of meaning with horizons beyond itself, in the general arena of ideology. At the same time, it can avoid the pitfalls of illusionism, of simply being a substitute for a world, parasitic on ideology, which it reproduces as reality. The imaginary must be de-realised; the material must be

11. Among many signs of a possible convergence, I would like to mention the writing of Annette Michelson – the interest, for instance, in Vertov and Eisenstein which she shares with Godard and European theorists – and the stand taken by the magazine *After-image*. The relationship of the film avant-garde to politics is discussed by Chuck Kleinhans in 'reading and thinking about the avant-garde', *Jump Cut* n6, March-April 1975, pp 21-5. For more detailed treatment, see my article 'Two Avant-gardes', in *Studio International*, 190, no 978, 1975.

semiotised. We begin to see how the problem of materialism is inseparable from the problem of signification, that it begins with the problem of the material in and of signification, the way in which this material plays the dual role of substrate and signifier. 23

The cataclysmic events which changed the course of the arts in the first decades of this century were seen by many as a radical and irreversible break. In due course, many came to see modernism as simply a metamorphosis of a type of art fatally compromised by bourgeois ideology, reproduced and generated within the conditions laid down by the market or the state, increasingly active in the arts. Yet one senses surely that something was at stake in that heroic era: that the achievements of the cubists, the futurists, of the destruction of the classical system of perspective and harmony, the primacy of narrative and 'realism', were more than strategic regroupment. It would be paradoxical indeed if film, a form still in its infancy when these momentous shifts took place, could restore the sense of direction which the other arts often seem to have lost.

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The BFI has just concluded a contract with Samuel Goldwyn Productions to acquire the non-theatrical rights of the following films:

Ball of Fire 1941 (Howard Hawks)

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The Best Years of our Lives 1946 (William Wyler)

Dead End 1937 (William Wyler)

Hurricane 1937 (John Ford)

The Little Foxes 1941 (William Wyler)



Nana 1935 (Dorothy Arzner)
A Song is Born 1948 (Howard Hawks)
Stella Dallas (silent) 1925 (Henry King)
Stella Dallas (sound) 1937 (King Vidor)
The Westerner 1940 (William Wyler)
The Winning of Barbara Worth (silent) 1926 (Henry King)

It will take some time to arrange for show prints to be made. We envisage these being ready for the end of February, 1976.



Wyler's use of space in **The Best Years of Our Lives**

Six Authors in Pursuit of *The Searchers*

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

The issue of *Screen Education* devoted to *The Searchers* (n 17, Winter 1975/6) is interesting in a number of ways, not least for what it indicates about the state of film theory as (increasingly) an institutionalised practice. In their introduction, the editors of the issue – Manuel Alvarado, Richard Exton, and Jim Grealy – disclaim any theoretical intention, and even go so far as to deny that any reading of the film is being attempted and that what is being offered is rather 'an examination of the most usual approaches to the teaching of Film'. The silence is deafening. For behind this innocent pluralism stands the fact that, while there may be many approaches – and these in the teaching context may be taken singly, even at the cost of contradiction – the theoretical position motivating the examination is in fact remarkably uniform. The editorial introduction, the four articles delineating different approaches – John Caughie on authorship, David Lusted on the image, Tom Ryall on genre and Douglas Pye on the industry – and a fifth article, by Edward Buscombe, on the film's critics, all operate broadly within the same ambit of theoretical assumptions and political strategies. Only Alan Lovell's article on problems of audience response, which brings up the rear, seems something of an odd man out.

Overall, throughout the issue, there is a concern to relate the pedagogic level – different approaches to be considered for classroom use – to two different levels of theoretical reflection. These two theoretical levels are on the one hand that of causality – what effectively ensures that the film comes out as it does – and on the other hand that of the way causal determinations are reflected as modes of intelligibility of the film text. The three levels are then articulated on the basis of correspondence, so that a particular teaching approach is related to the presence in the text of a code motivating that approach, and that in turn is referred back to the

process of production which determines the presence of the code as a structuring agent within the text. Thus authorship is validated as a pertinence in teaching practice to the extent that the author can be located in the text in the form of a sub-code, while the role of this sub-code in determining the overall intelligibility of the text is situated, at least partly, in relation to the general *empiria* of production of Hollywood movies. Similarly genre, which also provides a sub-code, but for which no individual is personally responsible, can be seen as a determinative structure in which a social instance receives formal shape, while at the same time having the merit of obvious accessibility (most children can recognise a Western from the age of six or thereabouts: difficulties come later). In the case of the other two approaches, the fit is not so exact. The industry, which is clearly causative, does not have a textual presence in the form of a particular code or sub-code: its presence is sub-textual. The system of images, on the other hand, which is textual (or inter-textual), is not determinative in a causal sense. But in general the pattern holds.

There are however a number of difficulties, both with what I take to be the implicit theoretical position behind the enterprise, and with its practical working out.

The first difficulty lies with the tendency of the writers to proceed from (film) theory to (education) practice, or from the theorised (film) to the pragmatic (teaching). An occasional counter-movement from classroom practice back to film theory does not undermine this underlying opposition. It has been part of SEFT's strategy in recent years to concentrate on the development of a body of knowledge about film. This was felt to be a pre-requisite for the introduction of film study into schools and colleges in a form that would not be eclectic and easily recuperated. With this strategy I continue very strongly to agree. But there is surely another encounter which needs to be made and which is that between the practice of film-textual work and education theory. Failing that a division of labour is likely to be perpetuated between film work which is endlessly meta-critical and its 'application' – or adaptation – in concrete classroom conditions.

I do not want to deal here with the tendency towards theoreticism that occurs in the issue of *Screen Education*. This seems to be rather a question for future debate, which I should not like to pre-empt. But there are one or two points at which there surfaces a basic uncertainty about the aims of the exercise, and these are more germane.

The first uncertainty is over the conflicting claims of scholarship and pedagogy. A lot of space is devoted to the question of Vista-Vision, and frame stills are even reproduced in that ratio. Since most students will be seeing the film on a 16mm print cropped to standard (4:3) ratio, they are perhaps owed a word of explanation – all the more so in that David Lusted's visual analysis, con-

28 ducted on a 35mm print, is, from a scholarly point of view, one of the best things in the issue. It would also have helped if this issue of *Screen Education* had followed the pattern set in numbers 10/11 and been more specific about the kind of classroom conditions (Higher Education? Further Education? Secondary?) into which the 'materials and approaches' on *The Searchers* were expected to be inserted.

But a more serious uncertainty (for our present purposes) emerges in the choice of the film – *The Searchers* – itself. Here the conflict is not between scholarship and pedagogy, but between those two together and on the other hand something which we can perhaps designate as taste. For the choice of *The Searchers* is, surely, a choice based on taste, and, moreover, a taste of a distinctly auteurist flavour. *The Searchers* enjoys an exalted place in the cinephiliac Pantheon. If it got there it is for one reason alone. It is not there as an example of its genre, or because of John Wayne, or VistaVision, or because it exemplifies the relation between the independents and the studios, but because of its position within the work of its author – by name, John Ford. It is in fact the film which, to anyone who knows (and loves) Ford's work, contains at the same time the most concentrated expression of his themes and the revelation of their tragic flaw. Not Ethan Edwards but John Ford himself is the tragic hero whose contradiction-riven destiny is charted by the film. It is not just that most of us who have come to like *The Searchers* have done so along an auteurist path, but that there is no other way. No criterion other than an auteurist one gives an account of the intelligibility of the film such as would justify giving it pride of place either in a private pantheon or in historiographic or pedagogic practice.

My quarrel with the *Screen Education* team can best be expressed by saying that, having themselves travelled the auteurist route towards *The Searchers*, they then turn round and bar access to that route to anyone who would follow them. For both the theoretical position set out in the issue and the related educational strategies are resolutely anti-auteurist. Thus not only are students likely to find themselves stuck with watching a film that they have no particular reason for liking, though their mentors apparently do, but (more seriously) there is an unexplained disjunction between two modes of presence of the text: a mode (accessible to the writers) in which subjective processes are recognised; and another (for public consumption) in which the film text is objectified as commodity.

The objectification of the film-text is the outcome of a critical practice, widespread in the last few years, which was in struggle against subjectivist tendencies in criticism – on the one hand the inscription of the values of the critic into the account of the film, and on the other hand the ascription of the values of the film to an originating source, the mind of the author. (These tendencies

might be called 'Sight and Sound' and 'Movie' respectively.) The 29
struggle was, however, conducted in a partial and one-sided manner.
The new criticism ('Screen'?) tended, among other things, to con-
fuse subjectivism (the affirmation of the 'full' subject) with the
processes of the subject as such. It also conceded too readily the
commodity character of films, while stopping short of a recognition
of the contradictions of the commodity form. In denouncing one
mystification, it succumbed to another. Meanwhile semiotics was
appropriated in its positivistic (pre-Kristeva) form as a science of
signifying systems rather than as a process of production of know-
ledge of other signifying processes.

One particular effect of this critical operation has been to give
currency to the naturalisation of the author as a sub-code. The
author (external to the text) records his presence through the signs
of this sub-code, to which the reader (also external to the text) can
then attribute codic pertinence, or not, as the case may be. Auteur
films, on this interpretation, can then be distinguished from non-
auteur films by the degree to which the authorial sub-code imposes
itself as a necessary component of reading on any spectator of
average or above average cinematic literacy.

Now *The Searchers* is a film in which the authorial sub-code (if
that is what it is) imposes itself with particular force — through
the mise-en-scène as well as in the thematic structure, and through
the agency of people other than the director himself. If we adopt
the distinction made by Peter Wollen in the 1972 Postscript to
Signs and Meaning in the Cinema between John Ford the person
and 'John Ford' the set of structures, then it has to be said that
'John Ford' is as much present in the work of collaborators who
made the film with and for the director as in the work of the
director (John Ford) in person. Conversely John Ford (as person)
has left his mark more heavily on the system of the mise-en-scène
than in the thematic structure, which is largely generic.

What the play with inverted commas aims to do is to distinguish
the author as empirical origin (John Ford, the man with the eye-
patch who isn't Raoul Walsh) from the author as effect of the text
('John Ford'). But the author as effect of the text cannot simply
be objectified in the form of a sub-code. Nor can this supposed
sub-code be then re-related, *tel quel*, to the author as producing
subject: for a variety of reasons.

First of all, if we understand by code or sub-code a pattern of
possibilities more or less formalisable as paradigms (the Fordian
sub-code would contain the paradigm desert/garden but would
also not contain, in significant form, the paradigm individual/group)
than we should also expect to be able to situate these paradigms
in relation to the non-authorial sub-codes of the text. In Ford's
case there is clearly a semantic sub-code to be placed on the side
of the codes of the content. But there are also other 'Fordian'
textual effects which do not belong there, but on the side of

30 expression; and in the case of other authors (Welles, Lupino, Hitchcock) there are also inscriptions of the author via his or her personal presence, as actor or actress, in the film.

Whereas many effects on the side of expression can be reduced to their signifieds (eg. in Ford, the effects that signify reticence) and so brought on to a level with the semantic paradigms; this is not always the case. The authorial sub-code, therefore, cannot be easily situated within the other impersonal codes of the text. Either we must say that there are several authorial sub-codes (of expression and of content etc, etc) or we must see the author as criss-crossing that text and marking it at various levels, in which case it would be better to talk of the author as system. Combining the two approaches (codes and system), we can argue that the Fordian system (in Metzian terms an inter-textual sub-system) incorporates various sub-codes, at least one of which (the semantic oppositions desert/garden etc) is generic in origin. But each of these sub-codes, on their entry into the system, concurs to produce 'John Ford' as a presumed subject of the 'statement' (*énoncé*) of the film – even though John Ford may not be their empirical origin. Here it is important that the system be seen as constructed by (perhaps it would be better to say 'in') the reader. But the process of construction of the particular sub-system which is the author involves not just the reading of marks which happen to be there but the positing of one of the conditions of their coherence, a condition which holds the film in place not just as narrated facts but as discourse, and which I would call the discursive, or narrating, instance. When Stephen Heath (*Screen* v 14 n 3, *Autumn* 1973, p 91), following Wollen, says that the structures 'Fuller' etc are separate from the directors Fuller etc and should be kept methodologically distinct, this is not in order to naturalise or objectify the marks in the text, but to insist on the intersubjectivity of the process of reading – an intersubjectivity in which the 'author' does not, however, appear as total person. But where he goes on to state that the author can return as a *fiction*, I would be more cautious. It seems to me rather that the 'fiction' of the author enables us to locate an *author of the fiction* who is by no means dispersed but who in 'his' notional coherence provides the means for us to grasp the text in the moment of its production before us.

The problem that then faces us is that the ascription of a narrating instance, in the form, say, of a speaking voice (whether or not it is taken as the voice of a named person), can easily constitute a thoroughly bourgeois mode of appropriation of the film text. Both Wollen and Heath try to avoid this danger, the former by his insistence on the fissuring of the text as against its posited coherence, and the latter by deconstructing not only the author as subject but also the receiver. But the problem cannot be suppressed that easily in terms of the textual relation itself. Another relation interposes itself, which is ideological and, in the

last instance, economic, and has to do with the packaging of the text in commodity form. 31

Classic authorial readings (eg in Sarris, with his naive identification of 'Ophuls' with Ophuls) attempt to transcend the commodity form by re-instituting the author as personal subject of the text. The critic enters into dialogue with the 'artist' in a language which denies the subsumption of either one into capitalist relations of production. The modified authorial reading which I am proposing, and which locates the author only as author of the fiction, may seem contaminated in the same way, in so far as it appears to invite the reader, and the bourgeois critic in particular, to make the film the object not just of consumption but of an act of appropriation. As bourgeois critic (complete with intellectual super-ego etc) I do not just enter into a process of dispersal and inter-mixture with the film, but perform a salvaging operation which makes the text, via its 'author', my ideological property over and above its role as object of consumption. 'John Ford' thus becomes part of my intellectual patrimony, along with 'Thomas Mann' or 'Marcel Duchamp' or whoever it may be. The possibility of making the appropriation, however, is not in fact the result of any arbitrary 'auteurist' choice on my part. The text is appropriable in any case, by virtue of its immanent coherence – as bourgeois text. All I have done extra is to have located the strongest form of this coherence – authored discourse – and given it a name.

To talk about film as bourgeois text is, once again, to raise the question of its origin and eventual place in the social formation. At first sight the strength of the objectivist thesis would appear to lie in its displacement of interest from authorship on to other determinations – generic, industrial etc – which concur to produce the film. The productive system authors the text, which then enters the world of circulation imprinted with various ideological characteristics. The disjunction of production and consumption, however, means that a certain process of deconstruction and reconstruction takes place in the act of reception of the film by the spectator, since the latter can select which codes to be receptive to and which to reject.

This position appears to have the benefit of a certain realism. It recognises, if only implicitly, the fact of the production of films, under capitalist conditions, as commodities. By seeing the film as a commodity, and an object of exchange, we can explain a number of otherwise troublesome features of its production and consumption, not least the disparity between the two.

A speculative analogy can be drawn here between signifying and economic systems. On a classical linguistic-semiotic model a message is generated (encoded), transmitted along a channel of communication, and received (decoded) at the other end. There is, therefore, a possible correspondence between these three moments

32 – encoding, transmission, decoding – and the economic moments of production, exchange and consumption. Normally linguistics assumes an ideal of perfect communication, in which there is a congruence between the codes of emitter and receiver and a negligible amount of interference in the channel. No matter that these conditions are rarely realised in practice. This is the model, and actual communications are measured by the extent to which they achieve it or fall short of it.

If we overlay this communication model on to the stages of production, exchange and consumption of a film, we find that the conditions of production and exchange do not permit the same kind of formulation of messages as is supposed to exist in speech acts, or even in works of literature. The production of the film is a kind of assemblage, as a result of which a text emerges which can be realised as use value in the moment of consumption. There is, therefore, no *a priori* reason why the performance of the assemblage – however much it is directed towards the creation of a consumable product – should directly correspond to the values of the product in use. Nor need the product, entering into the sphere of circulation, be required to be the same object-in-use for all possible consumers.

The essays on *The Searchers* do not explicitly make use of this analogy between film as commodity production and film as communicative system. Indeed I have yet to see it explicated anywhere. But it needs to be made explicit, because it is a common implicit practice and the hidden ground of the considerable (if provisional) results achieved by the application of semiotics to works of art. What makes the analogy so productive is precisely the fact that it doesn't work. Because there is not a perfect fit between the two systems, the application of one to the other points up disparities, and the analysis of these disparities is very revealing of the way both systems can be presumed to work. But the presence of these disparities should not be taken as providing any answers – only new problems. For what is discovered may well be, not the real dynamic of the communication performed by films which are produced and marketed in commodity form, but imperfections in the models used in the analysis – in the inadequacy of method to object.

If this emphasis on social production leaves me in partial dissent from some of the positions developed in *Screen* in recent years – positions which seem to me to stress the psychoanalytical instance at the expense of social determinations – it leaves me no less dissentient with any attempt half-heartedly to socialise the nature of film while leaving more or less intact the film text as singular commodified object. This means a disagreement, which I have tried to motivate, with much that lies behind the treatment of *The Searchers* in *Screen Education* 17. But *Screen Education* no more than *Screen* is a monolith, and I should like finally to take up two

things in the issue which seem to me particularly worth singling out. 33

The first of these is Tom Ryall's definition of genre in terms of a triangular relation between film-maker, work (I should prefer to say 'codes of the work') and audience. The dynamic of this relation (which is also the relation production-circulation-consumption) is crucially important, not only as something to be 'understood', but as something verifiable and reverifiable in the analysis of practice.

Secondly, Alan Lovell's article. As I said at the beginning, this is something of an odd man out. It asks a lot of questions, many of which are potentially subversive of the preceding material. As such it offers a challenge to the possible fixity of teaching methods and methods of analysis incurred by the other approaches. But it errs, in my opinion, in posing questions in a form to which neither the author nor anyone else can give an answer, because Lovell, more than anybody, accepts as given the respective inviolability of the text and its receiver (or, conversely, the receiver and his or her fetish). But it is not the case that we, as socially located but fully constituted individuals, confront the text as socially produced but singularly constituted object (like so many Robinson Crusoes who happen, for our sins, to be living in society). On the contrary we and the texts are in process together. To fall short of this recognition is to destine oneself to the constant asking of questions which have no answers and do not even provoke further questions.

Announcement

Screen welcomes, and will endeavour to respond to, criticism and comment from its readers. In the interests of increasing and regularising this flow of information, the Editorial Board of *Screen* invites its readers to a meeting with members of the Board and as many as possible of the authors of articles in this number of *Screen* at which they will be able to question the Board and the authors about those articles and about the magazine. This meeting, which we hope will be only the first of a regular series, will take place on Saturday 22 May at 11.00 am in the offices of SEFT at 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL.

Hiroshima and Marienbad: Metaphor and Metonymy

Linda Williams

In his famous articles on aphasia (*Selected Writings II*, The Hague 1971), Roman Jakobson notes that all systems of signification are based on the interaction of paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes – that is, on the horizontal contiguities of metonymy, and the vertical associations, *in absentia*, of metaphor. Jakobson further notes that realistic narrative literary language emphasises the contiguities of metonymy while poetic language operates through the association of similarities and differences of metaphor.

In an effort to extend his remarks beyond the realm of language, Jakobson also notes that the films of Chaplin exemplify the metaphorical while the films of Griffith exemplify the metonymic pole of film communication. Unfortunately, Jakobson does not explain in any detail why or how this is so. I would like to explicate Jakobson's very suggestive remarks in a comparison of two films by Alain Resnais. My purpose is not so much to categorise a work as metaphorical or metonymic but to see how these two poles are distributed and how they interact in different films. The two films, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, are of particular interest because of apparent similarities in their subjects and because both are directed by Resnais. Both films seem to be about a love affair between men and women who are pre-occupied, even obsessed, with certain events of the past. These are qualities that have become typical of Resnais' films. It would therefore be possible to speak of these two works in terms of the director's style as an auteur and how this style reflects his typical subjects. But instead, if we look at these two films in terms of the distribution of their discourse along the axes of metaphor and metonymy we may learn something new, not about Resnais' style but about the process of film *écriture* altogether.

The metaphorical or paradigmatic pole of communication operates, as Jakobson shows, by means of selection and substitution of

elements that are not actually given within the syntagm. Two 35
minimal units must be given within the syntagm in order to establish metalinguistically a category that can contain both units.

Hiroshima Mon Amour, as the title indicates, is a film that is built on the conjunction of two very disparate and conflicting units: Hiroshima, the city of atomic destruction is equated with the ecstasy of love. Resnais and Duras bring together these conflicting units in order to allude metaphorically to a more general category or essence that contains partial elements of both.

The general purpose of the film's many contradictory equations between love and horror seems to be to create a broad, connotative level of meaning that speaks of the general nature of human contact – of both its pain and its ecstasy. As the film progresses, each time there is contact between the two lovers this contact recalls a former contact with the woman's dead lover and all the pain that that death had caused. As the contact between the lovers increases their relationship becomes more painful, not only with the memory of lost love but also with the projected loss of their present love.

The film moves rapidly between past and present, opposing a moment from the past to a moment from the present. The point of this opposition is to make us see that these violently disparate moments do have something in common, that the horror of the atomic bomb has something to do with the ecstasy of lovers, that a cold and dead German lover has something to do with a live and warm Japanese lover, that destruction has something to do with creation, and that memory has something to do with forgetting.

A brief look at one of the film's typical 'flashback' montages should explain how these metaphors are worked out in visual terms. From the balcony of her hotel room the French woman gazes at the sleeping figure of her Japanese lover. His hand twitches slightly, followed by a cut back to the woman on the balcony. There is a certain tension in her face. Suddenly there is another cut to a different male hand in a slightly different position and in an obviously different place. The camera rapidly moves from the hand up to the bloodied face of a man who seems to be dying. This cold, dying face is being kissed by a young woman.

The entire sequence is very fast and rather shocking. At this point in the film we do not yet know about the French woman's German lover killed by partisans in the last days of the war. The only obvious thing that relates the two elements of this montage, or syntagm, is the visual similarity between the two male hands. Denotatively we are presented with two reclining male figures, one restful and the other agonised. Connotatively we seek a reason, a systematic justification for linking these two elements. We find this link in the hands which can be related to a broad metaphoric system of touch that runs throughout the film. The shot of the Japanese hand signifies the tender, pleasurable aspect of touch.

36 The German hand signifies the pain of loss. In this case it is really the absence of touch that is signified. The juxtaposition of these two hands, one present and one past, forces us to form, meta-linguistically, a transcendent category, of which these are the marked elements. This transcendent category speaks of the paradoxical nature of all human contact. It says that touch and absence of touch inhere in each other, that one constantly leads to the other, that present moments of closeness can never be held on to, and that the pain of absence cannot be either. Thus, the purpose of this metaphor is ultimately to undermine the given 'reality' or 'thereness' of the two elements of the syntagm. The predominance of these kinds of constructions in *Hiroshima* leads us to see that this is a film whose metonymies, or syntagma, are in a sense exploited by their systematic organisation. The contiguities of the syntagm are there only for the purpose of making a highly abstract statement about the essential nature of love.

Thus, in spite of the narrative character of this film, and in spite of what Christian Metz has described as the predominant syntagmatic character of all film communication, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is a film that is based, at least connotatively, upon a very radical form of metaphoric systematisation.

Radically metonymic constructions, on the other hand, refuse to operate on the basis of systematic elements that can be abstracted from the given units of the syntagm. In a sense one could say that *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* is about a man who is trying to establish an association between a present time and place and a past time and place, much as the woman in *Hiroshima* does. The film appears to be built upon a relation between past and present that will establish an eternal essence of a fated love that has existed '... pour toujours – dans un passé de marbre ...'. The striking thing about this film, however, is that the metaphor doesn't work. Each of X's attempts to convince A of their former relationship last year at Marienbad, Frederiksbad, or wherever, fails. The reality of these past times gives way to the reality of the present. Past and present are not really distinguishable.

What the film offers instead is a number of variations on a single theme: a man is trying to get a woman to go away with him. To do this he argues that they have loved in the past. But each of his arguments in which he tries to reconstruct this past, is really a version of their present relationship. The distance that is usually required between the two units of a metaphor is not provided in this film.

At the beginning of the film, for example, we hear X's voice as the camera tracks through the corridors and salons of a sombre, stately and somehow frozen hotel. His voice both describes the hotel and the basic elements of his past/present relation with A. But gradually this monologue is taken over by another voice. The camera has entered a salon in which a play is being presented and

it is now an actor who speaks X's lines to an actress who ends the play with the line: 'Je suis à vous'. Thus, in these first few minutes of the film, we are given all of the basic elements. What follows are variations. We cannot say that X and A, and the two actors who mirror them, are two halves of a metaphor. They are too much alike. We cannot construct, on the basis of similarities and differences, a connotative signified through which we can better understand the transcendent nature of relationships between men and women in general. We cannot even safely assume that this relationship is 'about' love. There is a good deal of evidence that it may be about death. But in either case the evidence is not conclusive.

Similarly, in another scene in which X and A gaze at a statue of a man and woman, the statue stubbornly holds on to its own individual existence. Although it is clear that the statue 'stands' in some way for X and A it is never established how or in what way. In speaking of the statue X and A provide several conflicting interpretations of its meaning – just as the film audience attempts to establish a systematic explanation of X and A themselves. In a sense, the statue is a metaphor for the refusal to be a metaphor, but such a statement reveals more about the metalinguistic habits of criticism than it does about the work itself. The important point is that we do not have the information to go beyond the literal, metonymic elements given in the film, we cannot determine where the woman in the statue is pointing. All the metaphors remain potential.

Does this mean, then, that *Marienbad* operates purely on the syntagmatic axis without the aid of a connotative system? Robbe-Grillet himself seems to think that this is the case; that film is the one medium that can push metonymy to its extreme limits. In the essay 'A Future for the Novel' (in *For a New Novel*, New York 1965, pp 20-21), Robbe-Grillet calls for novels that will imitate this essential metonymy of the film medium:

'... in the cinema one sees the chair, the movement of the hand, the shape of the bars. What they signify remains obvious, but instead of monopolising our attention, it becomes something added, even something in excess, because what affects us, what persists in our memory, what appears as essential and irreducible to vague intellectual concepts are the gestures themselves, the objects, the movements, and the outlines, to which the image has suddenly (and unintentionally) restored their reality. ... Let it be first of all by their presence that objects and gestures establish themselves, and let this presence continue to prevail over whatever explanatory theory that may try to enclose them in a system of references, whether emotional, sociological, Freudian or metaphysical.'

This however, is the 'early' Robbe-Grillet speaking – the Robbe-

38 Grillet whom Roland Barthes observed to have placed a naive aesthetic belief in a *Dasein* of things antecedent and exterior to the signs that constitute them. Robbe-Grillet's theory, as Gérard Genette has noted (*Figures I*, Paris 1966) is not the same as his practice. Genette observes that there is in fact a connotative and systematic level in all of Robbe-Grillet's works although it is not the closed, coherent system described by Bruce Morissette. What Genette observes instead is a system of variations. Each variation constitutes a slightly incompatible change in relation to its surroundings. We never know, for example, whether M shoots A or simply bids her a melancholy farewell. We never know whether X rapes A or seduces her in that bedroom whose decor is constantly changing, for all these possibilities are given.

Yet, in spite of all this uncertainty, various systematic explanations do arise in quite negative and provisional ways that are not meant to be coherent or complete. Genette's point is that Robbe-Grillet has placed the paradigmatic terms that are usually only constructed by a critical metalanguage within the contiguous series of the syntagm. Instead of placing the paradigms vertically, Genette claims that Robbe-Grillet places them horizontally in the discourse itself, in *praesentia*. In this way we can see *Marienbad* as offering a kind of metaphoric configuration, but one that does not undercut the denotative presence of the syntagm. By offering conflicting and only partial metaphors, Robbe-Grillet avoids the abstract essentialism that we have observed in *Hiroshima*. *Marienbad* is not 'about' the nature of love, it is about these two people in this present time and place. If we choose to see X as a figure of death that has come to take A away with him this abstract explanation can only be partial, it is challenged by other elements of the film.

Genette's argument shows that the systematic axis of the film has not disappeared altogether. While in *Hiroshima* the syntagm exists in order to be observed by the system, so in *Marienbad* the systems exist in order to thrust us back upon the syntagma. The radical metonymy of a film like *Marienbad* is one way of breaking down the essentialism so endemic to metaphoric constructions. When the systematic axis is present but not coherent, when it does not lead us back to some essential nature or order of things presumably given in the world, we are reminded that what we are dealing with is not the reality of the world, the *Dasein* of things, but the humanly constructed reality of the work itself. There is a paradox here: the metaphoric constructions of *Hiroshima* which use the denotative syntagm in order to express abstract, systematic notions that are *artificially* created, have the ultimate aim of referring back to the world, of rhetorically saying that *this* is how it is in reality; while the metonymic constructions of *Marienbad*, which use partial and contradictory systems that are contained within the given reality of the syntagma, have the ultimate aim of referring us back to the work rather than the world. Thus, the

apparent radical realism of metonymy (or at least Robbe-Grillet's brand of it) leads us back into the artifice of the work, while the artifice of metaphor leads us back to the 'reality' of the world. 39

But whichever way the work points, we come back to the notion that even the most metonymic use of film must operate on the double axis of syntagm and system, metaphor and metonymy. The realism of metonymy, even in film, is not the realism of the world. Film is neither the purely metonymic language that Bazin would have liked it to be, nor is it even the predominantly metonymic language that Christian Metz would like it to be. It is a language that creates its meanings through structural principles that are similar in all forms of communication. Just as the aphasiac must compensate for a disorder in contiguity or similarity by relying more heavily on the opposite pole, so Resnais has relied first on metaphor then on metonymy as his predominate means of expression in these two films. But as we have seen, neither of these poles can operate in total isolation from its opposite.

NOTES ON WOMEN'S CINEMA

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Writing the History of the American Film Industry: Warner Bros and Sound

J Douglas Gomery

I

Edward Buscombe raises important questions concerning film analysis, ideology and economics in his article, 'Notes on Columbia Pictures Corporation 1926-41' (*Screen* v 16 n 3, Autumn 1975, pp 65-82). It is indeed regrettable that critics must base ideological criticism of American films on problematic histories of the American film industry such as Lewis Jacobs' *The Rise of the American Film*, or 'pop' biographies like Bosley Crowther's *Hollywood Rajah*. Yet Buscombe gives the wrong reason for this lack of industrial history. The problem is *not* the non-existence of data, it is one of theory and methodology. Buscombe reveals his own bibliographical limitations in citing a lack of primary documents. For example, from 1940 to 1960 American economists interested in anti-trust issues directed their energies toward the mounds of data unearthed in the court proceedings leading to the United States Supreme Court decision, *United States v Paramount Pictures et al*, 334 US 131 (1948). Conant's admirable book, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry*, lists over 175 separate court decisions, and more than a dozen governmental investigations of the industry on this one topic alone. All are part of the public record. Only Conant and his fellow economists have ever probed this mountain of data. Historians of the American film industry have chosen thus far to ignore it. Moreover court records, and other data generated by numerous private and governmental agencies, exist for all periods and topics in the history of the American film industry. We must not simply trust the old bibliographies or faulty recollections, but go out and seek the evidence wherever it may be.

The more difficult undertaking is the creation of a theory and method for writing the history of any film industry. Certain film scholars, notably Thierry Kuntzel, have suggested that this task

be left to economists (*Screen* v 14 n 3, Autumn 1973, p 44). True, 41
economists have developed a powerful set of tools for analysis.
But film historians should and must ask different questions.
Economists, typically, pose the problem in the most general terms.
They test their hypotheses, and slowly add parts to their total
theoretical framework. For example, their interest in *United States*
v Paramount Pictures et al is not in motion picture history, but
rather how the industry responded to a most unusual remedy set
forth by the United States Supreme Court (see A D Neale: *The*
Anti-Trust Laws of the United States of America, Cambridge 1970,
pp 84-5, 166-70 and 404-7). Film historians would ask a different
set of questions; looking toward the formation of a closed set of
generalisations concerning cultural artifacts created in the past.
The history of any film industry ranges over a limited set of
economic phenomena, but an almost infinite set of socio-cultural
phenomena. Here the court *records*, not the effects of its decisions,
are of greater concern. They provide data about the structure and
conduct of the industry in question, the primary documents so
vital to the writing of any history. Simply put, the writing of the
history of any film industry is too important, too wide-ranging
and too synthetic to be left to economists.

In the past, historians of the American film industry have not
even followed the most basic practices of the field. Few explain
the basic methodologies they employ. More surprisingly, almost as
few cite their sources. Footnotes by film historians are rare items.
No other brand of history is so casual in violating this basic attri-
bute of scholarship. Edward Buscombe himself falls into this trap.
Except for two internal citations, one with no page given, his 12-
page history of Columbia Pictures is note free. One must only
wonder how he created his historical passages concerning the rise
of this firm in the 1920's. A cursory examination of Bob Thomas's
'pop' biography, *King Cohn*, seems to reveal his source. Is Bus-
combe just recycling the very myths he asks us to question? With-
out footnotes, or even a bibliography, the reader can never know.

II

In relation to these problems I should like to confront a conclusion
in the history of the American film industry now accepted almost
as gospel: Warner Bros' impending bankruptcy caused its innova-
tion of sound. Numerous writers of the history of the American
film industry have set forth this claim. Lewis Jacobs in his *The*
Rise of the American Film (New York 1939, p 297) writes:

'On August 26, 1926 (sic), Warner Brothers, in a desperate effort
to ward off bankruptcy, premiered a novelty, the first motion

Textbook author Gerald Mast repeats the same assertion using slightly different language (*A Short History of the Movies*, Indianapolis 1971, p 227):

'Western Electric offered Vitaphone in 1926 to Warner Brothers, a family of struggling film producers whose company was near bankruptcy. The Warners had nothing to lose.'

Elsewhere Kenneth MacGowan, David Robinson, Laurence Kardish, Peter Cowie, Kevin Brownlow, Jean Mitry and George Sadoul echo this conclusion.²

Other writers, coming after Jacobs' standard work, were not so bold. Some, like Arthur Knight, A R Fulton and Henri Mercillon, ignore the issue of motivation.³ Presto! Warner Bros adopted the new technology. Other accounts are a little more expansive, containing a sentence or two. Benjamin Hampton and Charles Higham (twice) credit Warner Bros' desire for more theatres, D J Wenden the overall industry structure, and Robert Sklar the industry's costly movie palaces.⁴ Harry M Geduld provides the longest account of the coming of sound in *The Birth of the Talkies* (New York 1975). Yet he avoids, and thereby complicates this, issue. For Geduld Warner Bros first learned about sound because of an investment in radio. It then, for no apparent reason, adopted sound. Bankruptcy almost resulted when Warner Bros over-committed itself in this one area (pp 107-8, 113). Nowhere does Geduld explain why the Warner Bros chose to gamble all its assets on an idea and system all its richer competitors had rejected, or how it financed all this new investment.

Warner Bros' published financial statements seem to support the Jacobs-inspired, traditional version. Using the data in Table I, a

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1. The première took place on August 6, 1926; see *Variety*, August 11, 1926, pp 4, 5 and 10.
 2. Kenneth MacGowan: *Behind the Screen*, New York 1965, p 283; David Robinson: *The History of World Cinema*, New York 1973, p 162; Peter Cowie, ed: *A Concise History of the Movies*, New York 1972, p 197; Laurence Kardish: *Reel Plastic Magic*, New York 1972, p 103; Kevin Brownlow: *The Parade's Gone By*, New York 1968, p 657; Jean Mitry: *Histoire du cinéma*, Paris 1964, vol II, pp 353-4; Georges Sadoul: *Histoire du cinéma mondial*, Paris 1949, p 228.
 3. A R Fulton: *Motion Pictures*, Norman Okla 1960; p 155; Arthur Knight: *The Liveliest Art*, New York 1957, p 146; Henri Mercillon: *Cinéma et monopoles*, Paris 1953, p 18.
 4. Robert Sklar: *Movie-Made America*, New York 1975, p 152; D J Wenden: *The Birth of the Movies*, New York 1975, p 173; Charles Higham: *The Art of the American Cinema*, New York 1974, p 85; Charles Higham: *Warner Brothers*, New York 1975, p 41; Benjamin B Hampton: *History of the American Film Industry*, New York 1931, pp 379 and 381.

narrative could be constructed in the following fashion. The company was losing large amounts of money, when on or about March 1926, it presumably decided to risk all on sound. Despite the mild success of *Don Juan*, the losses continued, albeit at a somewhat slower pace. But it was *The Jazz Singer* and its subsequent revenues in the beginning of 1928 which saved the company. Bankruptcy was averted; the turnabout was complete. 43

The 'bankruptcy hypothesis' is so well accepted that at least two scholars have employed it as a basis for their analysis of film and ideology. In 'The Movie Jew as an Image of Assimilationism,

Table I

Warner Bros Pictures, Inc:
Net Profit and Loss

<i>Fiscal Year-Ending</i>	<i>Profit (Loss)</i>
	\$
March 31, 1924	103,000
March 31, 1925	1,102,000
March 27, 1926	(1,338,000)
August 28, 1926 (5 months)	(279,000)*
August 27, 1927	30,000
August 31, 1928	2,045,000
August 31, 1929	14,514,000

* A 669,000 dollar loss at an annual rate.

Source: Warner Bros Pictures, Inc, *A Financial Review and Brief History: 1923-1945* (New York: Privately printed, 1946), p 28.

1903-1927,' *Journal of Popular Film*, v IV n 3, 1975, pp 190-207. Thomas Cripps writes:

'Warner Brothers, a studio of modest proportions and in straitened circumstances, saw "talking film" as a gimmick that would attract revenue, while Al Jolson, a Broadway song-and-dance man, gambled on sound as a way to score a point on his rival, George Jessel. For the vehicle that would either carry Hollywood into the sound era or destroy both Jolson's career and the studio, they chose Samson Raphaelson's *The Jazz Singer* (1927).'

Even as sophisticated an analyst of film and ideology as Jean-Louis Comolli accepts the traditional explanation. In 'Technique

44 et idéologie (5): Caméra, perspective, profondeur de champ,' *Cahiers du Cinéma* nn 234-5, Dec-Feb 1971-2, pp 99-100, he writes:

'It was necessary that Warner Brothers, a small company almost on the edge of bankruptcy, and which had nothing to lose, try its luck; the risk was, in August, 1926, the release and success of *Don Juan*, "the first sound and singing film".'

Comolli goes on to conclude from this and other evidence that for the coming of sound technological change was not the moving force, but rather the effect of the specific ideological functions served by the entrepreneurs of the American film industry. How much is Comolli's conclusion tied to this historical construct? Would it still hold if Warner Bros was *not* bankrupt?

III

Several factors can be isolated that are important for analysing any technological change. The innovating firm must, directed by its entrepreneurs, raise the necessary capital and devise a strategy to crack the market held by its competitors. Hence the innovator's situation vis-a-vis its competitors and the state of the business cycle must not be ignored. For Warner Bros' innovation of sound, every account of these factors has remained mere speculation, or has been sketched out only in the most superficial detail. Yet rich primary data does exist with which one can begin to answer these questions. During the 1930's Warner Bros and its principal licensor of sound equipment, Electrical Research Products, Inc (ERPI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T), tangled in three major patent and contractual suits.⁵ Secondly, in 1937 the United States Congress investigated AT&T's operations in non-telephone areas, including sound motion pictures. This probe produced several file drawers full of testimony, confidential memoranda, and almost all of ERPI's financial records.⁶ Finally motion-picture trade publications, such as *Variety* and *Moving Picture World*, and general business publications like *Barrons* also charted the film industry's activities in the late 1920's. With these as yet unused sources, one can begin to revise the standard histories of the introduction of sound outlined above.

5. General Talking Pictures Corporation et al v American Telephone and Telegraph Company et al, 18 F Supp 650 (1937); Electrical Research Products, Inc v Vitaphone Corporation, 171 A 738 (1934); Koplar (Scharaf et al, Interveners) v Warner Bros Pictures, Inc et al, 19 F Supp 173 (1937).

6. US Federal Communications Commission: *Staff Report on Electrical Research Products, Inc*, Volumes I, II and III (Pursuant to Public Resolution No 8, 74th Congress, 1937).

For Warner Bros one man secured the financial backing and provided much of the necessary business acumen. He was Waddill Catchings, the chief investment banker of Wall Street's Goldman, Sachs Company. A Mississippi-born graduate of the Harvard Law School, Catchings joined Goldman, Sachs in 1918. Not only an investment banker, he also authored treatises on economic problems. With William T Foster he organised the Pollack Foundation for Economic Research in 1921, and co-authored two books during the 1920's on economic problems: *Business Without a Buyer* in 1926 and *The Road to Plenty* in 1928. Central to Catchings' economic theory was the necessity for the businessman-entrepreneur to take bold action. Only this behaviour, coupled with an adequate money supply, could ensure prosperity and eliminate severe depressions such as had occurred in 1920-21. Catchings demonstrated his faith in this principle in his investment work at Goldman, Sachs; during the boom of the 1920's he was the most optimistic of all the 'New Era' financiers.⁷

Warner Bros first came to Catchings' attention in December 1924. Henry A Rudkin, senior partner of McClure, Jones and Reed, another New York investment house, advised Catchings that Warner Bros sought to expand and needed Wall Street help. McClure, Jones and Reed was too small to provide large-scale assistance. Was Goldman, Sachs interested? This seemed an extremely risky proposition even to Catchings. Up to this point, Wall Street had done little large-scale financing of motion-picture firms, with the exception of Famous Players. On at least two prior occasions even the risk-loving Catchings had refused to issue securities for motion-picture corporations; he deemed none stable enough for Goldman, Sachs support. Moreover, Catchings had never even heard of Warner Bros. Nevertheless on Rudkin's recommendation he undertook the usual routine investigation as to the credit standing and expected economic future of Warner Bros.⁸

Several aspects of the Warner Bros' operation impressed Catchings. One was its strict control of production budgets. Goldman, Sachs had never previously been sufficiently confident to finance motion-picture concerns because it had received no guarantee that their production departments could set limits for the cost of films. Warner Bros' rigid cost-accounting procedures, especially the day-

7. Arthur M Schlesinger, Jr: *The Crisis of the Old Order*, Boston 1956, pp 134-6; William T Foster and Waddill Catchings: *The Road to Plenty*, New York 1928, pp 84-93; 'Warner Brothers Pictures,' *Fortune*, December 1937, p 98; Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 279-83 (Waddill Catchings' direct testimony; the case concerns a stockholder's suit against the Warner brothers for manipulation of stock prices at the expense of other stockholders, and the testimony cited here was background to the crucial facts disputed in the case).

8. Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 283-5 (Catchings' direct testimony), pp 1100-1101 (Harry Warner's direct testimony).

46 to-day audits by production manager Jack Warner, set Warner Bros apart from the other firms he had considered. He also learned Warner Bros used extremely economical methods in building their studio lot and acquiring props. Catchings agreed to finance Warner Bros, but *only* if it would allow him to dictate a master plan for long-term growth. Catchings had helped build up other companies. Both Woolworths and Sears-Roebuck had associated themselves with Goldman, Sachs as small, regional businesses and with its backing had grown into large, national corporations. Only with this long-term control could Catchings interest important banks in generating the necessary capital.⁹

Both Catchings and Warner Bros' president, Harry Warner, knew that financing was the first and most important part of the company's operations that Goldman, Sachs, or any investment house must change.¹⁰ During its short existence Warner Bros had used two methods to obtain capital for film production. For a limited number of films Harry Warner would approach a rich individual and trade an interest in the profits of a film for a contribution to its backing. Warner Bros had to pay extremely high interest rates, sometimes as high as 100 per cent, for these loans. The more frequent method was the 'franchise system' under which Warner Bros divided the United States and Canada into twenty-eight zones and secured one franchise holder per zone, usually a major exhibitor. It would then obtain from each backer an advance toward a set number of films to be repaid with a percentage of the expected profits. The franchise holder in turn would then distribute the film within his exclusive territory. Warner Bros would pay extraordinary fees for these required advances. For the typical film, each of the twenty-eight backers would contribute several thousand dollars. For this, in most cases, Warner Bros returned double (and sometimes more) the original amount. Thus the effective interest rate was greater than 100 per cent. Catchings was sure he could procure cheaper rates. Moreover Warner Bros also lacked a distribution network to reap the significant advantages of economies of scale, a theatre circuit, and the publicity machinery to differentiate its films from those of other independent producers.¹¹

Negotiations between Catchings and Harry Warner commenced

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9. Koplal, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 320-24 (Catchings' direct testimony), pp 1106-7 (Harry Warner's direct testimony); *Electrical Research Products, Inc v Vitaphone Corporation*, 171 A 738 (1934), Affidavit of Waddill Catchings, pp 1-2.
 10. The four Warner brothers had a clean division of labour regarding their motion-picture firm at this time. Harry, the eldest, was chief operating and financial officer, Abe ran the distribution branch, Sam the technical and exhibition activities and Jack the production.
 11. Koplal, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 320-4 (Catchings' direct testimony); *Motion Picture News*, April 4, 1925, p 1409; February 7, 1925, p 557.

in January 1925. One month later, upon hearing that Warner Bros was trying to make a deal with Goldman, Sachs, the franchise holders rebelled. Normally unorganised, they appointed a committee to meet with Harry Warner. They were afraid that Warner Bros would try to terminate what had been an extraordinarily profitable relationship. At this point Harry Warner pursued an alternative. He knew that Vitagraph, a pioneer motion-picture producer with an international distribution network of fifty exchanges, was in severe financial difficulty. Its operations had generated extremely large losses for each of the past five years. Harry went directly to Vitagraph's president, Albert E Smith, and offered to buy the corporation. Smith's most immediate problem was paying off \$980,000 of current liabilities. Harry Warner offered to take over these debts, and purchase the shares of Smith, J Stuart Blackton and the estate of William T Rock for \$800,000. Warner Bros would then possess majority control (*Variety*, February 4, 1925, p 23).

Harry Warner closed the deal in March 1925, and announced it to the surprised franchise holders in April 1925. Warner Bros now had twenty-six exchanges in the United States, four in Canada, ten in England and ten in Continental Europe. It also acquired one studio in Brooklyn, New York, another in Hollywood, a large laboratory, a film library, real estate and story rights. This takeover was the first move in Warner Bros' gamble to break the bind of the franchise holders and move up in importance in the industry. It was also the last financial manoeuvre done without the direct approval of Waddill Catchings. Its daring captured Catchings' imagination and he agreed to finance Warner Bros' future operations. In March 1925, Goldman, Sachs and McClure, Jones and Reed underwrote 170,000 new shares of Warner Bros' stock to finance the Vitagraph deal. In May, Catchings joined the Warner Bros' board of directors and was named chairman of the board's finance committee.¹²

Immediately Catchings set out to obtain the necessary permanent financing for production. After much effort he established a revolving credit line of \$3,000,000 at 5 per cent interest. To secure such a sizeable loan Catchings went right to the top of the American banking fraternity. The leading commercial bank in the United States at the time was the National Bank of Commerce in New York; it had never granted a loan to any motion picture company. Catchings managed to persuade board chairman, James S Alexander, at least to study the matter. The National Bank of Commerce completed an extremely thorough study and decided to make an exception with Warner Bros. Alexander added an extra

12. *Moving Picture World*, May 2, 1925, p 25; *Motion Picture News*, May 2, 1925, p 1925; May 2, 1929, p 2020; Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 330, 1101-1111.

48 1 per cent call-charge to the normal 5 per cent demanded of its best customers. This charge would accrue even if the account were never used. Having persuaded the National Bank of Commerce, Catchings then approached the Colony Trust Company of Boston. Again he achieved success. With agreement from these two conservative giants, four other large banks easily fell into line. Pooling the loans, the revolving credit was established. Catchings had solved the short-term crisis for funding production.¹³

He next turned his attention to acquiring funds for capital expansion. He and Harry decided Warner Bros. needed more exchanges, first-run theatres, better promotion and the remodeling of existing production facilities. In the fall of 1925 Catchings orchestrated a \$4,000,000 three-year, 6½ per cent debenture. Warner Bros expanded in the required directions. It acquired ten medium-sized first-run theatres in cities including Seattle, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. These theatres became the nucleus of its new chain with Sam Warner in charge. Warner Bros also leased first-run theatres in key locations, beginning with an eleven-year commitment to the Orpheum in Chicago's Loop.¹⁴ The only available Broadway theatre was the Piccadilly; this Warner Bros purchased for \$800,000, and immediately re-named the Warners'. Unfortunately it was the smallest major theatre in the Broadway area, seating only 1,500. Warner Bros began planning its biggest theatre: the 3,600 seat, \$2,000,000 Warners' in Hollywood. Moreover it signed an agreement with Alexander Pantages to use his vaudeville artists as presentation acts in its new theatres. In the second area, Warners opened eight new distribution exchanges in the United States and Canada to provide a complement equal to Famous Players. It added twenty-one new exchanges in South America and the Far East. The return was immediate. Sales throughout the world helped offset some of its new investments. Warner Bros also added \$250,000 in improvements to Vitagraph's Hollywood studio (see *Variety*, August 12, 1925, p 23; December 2, 1925, p 36; December 16, 1925, p 7).

Catchings and Harry Warner set their sights on the top. In July 1925, Warner Bros opened a \$500,000 national advertising campaign in the major general-interest magazines and selected newspapers, including a special coordinated blitz through the Hearst Newspapers.¹⁵ Catchings and Harry Warner wanted the Warner

13. Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 353-63 (Catchings' direct testimony); John Sherman Porter, ed: *Moody's Manual of Industrials* 1925, New York 1926, pp 1899-1900.

14. *Moving Picture World*, September 5, 1925, p 74; *Variety*, August 26, 1925, p 21; September 23, 1925, p 36; July 5, 1925, p 21; Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 390-400 (Catchings' direct testimony).

15. *Variety*, June 10, 1925, p 30; *Moving Picture World*, August 1, 1925, p 550; *Variety*, September 23, 1925, p 36; *Moving Picture World*, June 13, 1925, p 769; *Variety*, April 1, 1925, p 27; April 8, 1925, p 29.

Bros name to become as well known as Famous Players, or First National. In July 1925, Catchings even bid \$8,500,000 to take over Universal. Carl Laemmle wanted \$10,000,000. Catchings considered this a reasonable price. However, Laemmle and Robert Cochrane would not let Catchings' accountants examine Universal's books. Without this information to convince bankers, Catchings called off the deal. This was Catchings' first attempt at a merger, but not his last. Ultimate success would come with the takeover of First National itself in October 1928 (*Variety*, July 15, 1925, p 26; October 28, 1925, p 27).

As a final expansionist move towards acquiring more publicity, Warner Bros sought to buy a radio station. Sam Warner was fascinated with the new technological improvements in radio that seemed to appear almost daily. He and Warner Bros' chief electrician, Frank N Murphy, coordinated the purchase of the necessary equipment to set up a station. KFWB opened in the spring of 1925. Warner Bros was the second motion-picture producer with a station, and the only one in Hollywood. KFWB openly copied the publicity methods of the then nationally popular radio master-of-ceremonies and theatre entrepreneur, Samuel Rothafel (Roxy). Harry Warner even advised the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association to establish a station for the whole industry (*Moving Picture World*, February 21, 1925, p 769; March 21, 1925, p 286; April 11, 1925, p 592).

It was as an outgrowth of these radio dealings that Sam Warner, through Western-Electric salesman, Nathan Levinson, became interested in Western Electric's newly developed sound (on-disc) system. Together they convinced Harry to see a demonstration in the early part of May 1925. However they did not tell him the nature of the films because, as Harry later recalled (General Talking Pictures, 18 F Supp 650, Record, p 1108):

'if [they] had said talking picture, I never would have gone, because [talking pictures] had been made up to that time several times, and each was a failure. I am positive if [they] said talking picture, I would not [have] gone.'

Nevertheless Harry went. In a small screening room he first saw a man speaking. Next a five-piece jazz orchestra appeared on the screen. Harry became interested. His companion, Sidney J Weinberg, Catchings' assistant, was ecstatic. Spurred on by the banker's enthusiasm, Harry conceived of an idea of how to use this new invention. He later remarked to Catchings: 'If it can talk, it can sing.' Warner Bros could record the greatest vaudeville and musical acts and present them in small-to-medium-sized theatres. This would provide for these theatres presentations equal to, or better than those currently available, at a much lower cost. It was an entrepreneurial vision that would require the large amounts of

50 financing only Catchings could provide.¹⁶

In June 1925, Warner Bros signed a contract with Western Electric, and its representative, Walter J Rich, to produce vaudeville shorts experimentally. Slowly the two parties cooperated on the problems of production, and jockeyed for the best market position vis-à-vis Famous Players, Loews and First National. The *Don Juan* show was the product of the year-long production effort. Contractual complications arose on the financial side. Warner Bros signed two sets of agreements with Western Electric – one in April 1926, and a second in May 1927. Constant negotiations stalled any major thrust into the market. Slowly Harry carried out and perfected his strategy of 'vaudeville shorts'. Success would come in the first part of 1928 when these shorts, *The Jazz Singer* and the new part-talkies would begin to generate revenues commensurate with the \$3,000,000 investment Warner Bros had accumulated in three years, most of it during the first year.¹⁷

Although the investment in sound in 1925 and 1926 was sizeable, it represented only one-fifth of Warner Bros' increase in assets. The other phases of its growth continued. Warner Bros even began to experience some return on these investments. Ernst Lubitsch's *Lady Windemere's Fan* established box-office records on its debut in January 1926 at the Warners' theatre in New York City; crowds had to be turned away. Lubitsch, guaranteed at least \$150,000 per year, was Warner Bros' top director (*Moving Picture World*, January 9, 1926, p 161; *Variety*, April 14, 1926, p 23). In February 1926, *The Sea Beast* with John Barrymore also proved to be exceptionally popular. In an attempt to duplicate the successful 'road-show' strategy of the 'Big Three', Warner Bros even worked out a deal with legitimate theatres to showcase the film at two dollars top admission. In April 1926, at its first sales convention (of three) Harry Warner announced twenty-six features for the 1926-27 season, sixteen less than the previous season. However these twenty-six 'Warner Winners' would cost more than the previous years' forty-two features. In addition he announced nine new 'road-show' specials, including John Barrymore in *Don Juan* and *Manon Lescaut*, and Syd Chaplin in *The Better 'Ole*.¹⁸ More-

16. Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 366-8 (Catchings' direct testimony), p 1101 (Harry Warner's direct testimony). For a similar, less detailed account, see Joseph P Kennedy, ed: *The Story of the Films as Told by the Leaders of the Industry*, New York 1927, pp 320-22.

17. The innovation of Vitaphone by Warner Bros and the reaction of Fox and the rest of the film industry are described in the author's PhD dissertation: 'The Coming of Sound to the American Cinema: A History of the Transformation of an Industry,' University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975, pp 110-253.

18. *Variety*, February 24, 1926, p 24; *Moving Picture World*, May 8, 1926; May 15, 1926, pp 212-3; *Variety*, January 30, 1926, p 446; *Moving Picture World*, May 8, 1926, p 116.

over Harry had just signed George Jessel to duplicate his popular role of *The Jazz Singer*. Waddill Catchings, in the closing address to this April convention, praised Warner Bros for its solid advance during the past year, and predicted a bright future with greater potential than any other firm in the industry.¹⁹ 51

Warner Bros had extended itself in still other areas in the first half of 1926. It opened its second radio station, WBPI, in New York City. Headquartered at the Warners' theatre, and under the direction of Sam Warner, it generally employed vaudeville talent currently at the theatre (*Moving Picture World*, January 16, 1926, p 220). On May 4, Sam Warner launched a transcontinental tour of a 'radio station'. Controlled by KFWB, Frank Murphy and his crew could set up the portable station in twenty minutes at any theatre using a Warner Bros' film. It would then broadcast the stage show, sponsor contests and generally create publicity for Warner Bros' pictures and exchanges. The 'station' toured throughout the summer months. Sam also oversaw yet another new aspect of Warner Bros' operations. In April 1926, Warner Bros re-equipped Vitagraph's Brooklyn laboratory with modern apparatus; it had a capacity to process four million feet per week. Warners also expanded into foreign production by closing a deal to co-produce ten films with the Bruckman Film Company of Germany.²⁰

With all this capital outlay, it was not unexpected that the yearly financial statement, issued in March 1926, stood in the red. The loss was large, \$1,338,000, but the company had more than doubled its asset base. It now possessed an international distribution network, owned a growing chain of theatres, and was producing higher-priced films. Moreover it had the support of the nation's best banks in its climb toward the top of the industry (*Moving Picture World*, May 1, 1926, p 2; July 10, 1926, p 88; *Variety*, June 30, 1926, p 49). By August 1927, revenues had grown sufficiently to cut its rate of loss in half. Foreign operations had become quite lucrative. Rentals in Great Britain improved substantially even in 1926, and would grow by more than \$2,000,000 for the fiscal year ending August 31, 1927. Yet Catchings and Harry Warner continued to invest, especially in higher-priced pictures. By August 1927, despite having tripled its asset base in two years, Warner Bros had turned the corner and even registered a small profit. The gigantic success of sound motion pictures, built on the solid base of earlier investments, would turn potential long run gain into immediate rewards in 1928.²¹

19. *Moving Picture World*, May 1, 1926, p 44; April 24, 1926, p 582; Warner Bros Pictures Inc: *A Financial Review and Brief History*, New York 1946 (privately printed), p 30.

20. *Moving Picture World*, May 1, 1926, p 2; May 15, 1926, p 226; September 18, 1926, p 173; April 17, 1926, p 2; March 20, 1926, p 4.

21. *Moving Picture World*, March 5, 1927, p 18; Electrical Research Products, 171 A 738, Plea, Exhibit D, p 335.

52 Throughout this period Catchings continued to secure the necessary finance. As soon as the Vitaphone operations began to demand larger amounts of credit, Catchings was commensurate to the task. The initial Vitaphone contract called for a \$500,000 investment; by February 1927, Warner Bros had accumulated over \$3,000,000 in assets. To obtain this capital, Catchings kept refinancing the revolving credit of \$3,000,000. Catchings continued his persuasive cajoling; the bankers remained cooperative. In fact in August 1926, the Central Union Trust Company of New York agreed not even to notify Warner Bros' creditors of their pledged accounts receivable when it extended Warner Bros a new loan for \$1,000,000. In September 1926, he secured yet another \$1,000,000 from S W Strauss and Co; Harry Warner used this to improve the former Vitagraph studio in Hollywood. Catchings would continue this adroit financing until 1930. By then Warner Bros' asset base had grown from slightly more than \$5,000,000 in 1925 to \$230,000,000, a 4,600 per cent increase in five years.²²

IV

Several specific and general conclusions emerge from this short history. In terms of the question posed concerning the cause of Warner Bros' innovation of sound, the firm was never 'near bankruptcy'. In its early years it was a profitable operation, but one that could only become more profitable with a sizeable expansion in several important areas. To effect this growth, Waddill Catchings and Harry Warner secured funds for production, distribution, exhibition and promotion. These investments created short-term losses. In fact it was simply a case of well-financed, well-planned short-run indebtedness. Moreover Catchings had the support of America's most important banks throughout this period of expansion. And sound was only one part, albeit a very risky one, of the investment surge. It succeeded, only, because the early expansion had created the necessary structural base.

Warner Bros' expansionary activities in the boom of the mid-1920's were part of a plan to move it up in the industry. At the time the industry's Big Three, Famous Players, Loews and First National, dominated the industry. Fox, Film Booking Office (FBO), Universal, Pathé-Producers Distributing Corporation, and Warner Bros composed a second tier. Fox and Warner Bros would, and did, successfully challenge the 'Big Three'. In fact, Warner Bros was so successful it acquired First National in 1928. FBO and

22. Koplar, 19 F Supp 173, Record, pp 455-9, 473-5, 479 and 560-5 (Catchings' direct testimony); John Sherman Porter, ed: *Moody's Manual of Industrials 1927*, New York 1928, pp 385-6; *Variety*, September 1, 1926, p 5; November 24, 1926, p 10.

Pathé-PDC would become the basis of Radio-Keith-Orpheum. 53
Universal was too conservative and fell in importance to join
United Artists, a special case, and the only independent of the
1920's to emerge as an important firm, Columbia. The other
independent producers of the 1920's either went out of business,
or became an almost insignificant part of the market.

On a larger scale this account of Warner Bros' expansion is only
one example of a possible revisionist history of the American film
industry. For the bankruptcy question, *a priori* one would begin
to challenge the usual conclusion, as well as the terms in which
that explanation is written. Other areas should be subjected to
similar probes. But we must be careful. We must create our first
principles, and methods. We must examine the accepted notions
of bias and cause, and begin to search out new sources of primary
data. Only then can the type of history of the American film
industry emerge that Buscombe demands, and Cripps, Comolli and
other film-and-ideology analysts so vitally need.

Titles in black lettering on a grey background:

HISTORY LESSONS

From the novel fragment

by Bertolt Brecht

THE BUSINESS AFFAIRS

OF MR JULIUS CAESAR

Dissolve

A film

by

Jean-Marie Straub

and

Danièle Huillet

Dissolve

Renato Berta

Emilio Bestetti

photography

Dissolve

Jeti Grigioni

sound

Dissolve

Leo Mingrone

Sebastian Schadhauer

Benedikt Zulauf

assistant directors

Noises of the *viale dei Fori Imperiali*

1 *Fixed shot: a map on the *viale dei Fori Imperiali*: the Mediterranean world and the Roman Empire at its maximum extent.*

(length of shot 1m; c 5")

Noises of the *viale dei Fori Imperiali* (continued)

2 *Fixed shot: second map. The Mediterranean world and the Roman Empire after the Punic Wars.*

(length 16 frames; 3")

Noises (continued)

3 *Fixed shot: third map. The Mediterranean world and Italy.*
(length 35 frames; 1½")

Noises (continued)

- 4 *Medium close-shot/medium long-shot, slight low-angle: statue of Julius Caesar standing on a plinth by the side of the via dei Fori Imperiali, with the Capitol in the background.*
(lens 12.5; length 1m 50cm; c 8")

Synch noises

- 5 *Tracking shot: the young man, from behind at the wheel of his car, drives down the via Garibaldi – the Eclair is behind him in the car – the via Goffredo Mameli, the via Agostino Bertami, the Piazza di S Cosimato (market), he then takes the via Roma Libera, goes along the via Natale Grande, crosses the via di S Francesco a Ripa and continues to drive until the viale Trastevere (on the other side: Piazza Mastai).*
(lens 9; length 97m; c 8' 40")

Synch noises

TERRACE-GARDEN OF THE VILLA ALDOBRANDINI AT FRASCATI

- 6 *Medium close-shot, slight high-angle: the young man and the banker seated next to each other on a bench – the Eclair is behind them – and the young man, on the right in the foreground, head-and-shoulders, is slightly turned towards the banker, on the left in the middle-ground, right-hand profile, who is looking straight ahead.*
(lens 17.5; length 1m 30cm; c 7")

The banker Mummius Spicer: At that time he no longer, as far as I know, did anything at all.

- 7 *Close-shot, slight high-angle, track forward along the axis – the Eclair is still behind the bench: the banker alone, right-hand profile, three-quarters back-view.*
(lens 25; length 5m; c 27")

The banker: There had also in his life been an attempt to take up a profession and to earn money. He had tried himself as a lawyer in two suits which he conducted on behalf of the Democratic Clubs against high Senate officials: for extortion and other abuse of office perpetrated in the Provinces.

The City paid young lawyers from good families very decently for such suits.

- 8 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the Eclair is in front of the bench: the banker, a little more from the right.*
(lens 25; length 26m 50cm; 2' 23")

The banker: It was the old struggle of the City with the Senate. Since the dawn of time 300 families had shared among themselves all high offices in and outside Rome. The Senate was their stock market. There they negotiated who amongst them should sit on the Senate bench, who in the judge's chair,

who on the battle horse, and who only on his estate. They were great landowners, treated the other Roman citizens as their servants and their servants as serfs. The merchants they treated as thieves, and the inhabitants of the conquered Provinces as enemies. One of them was the old Cato, a great-grandfather of our Cato, who in mine and C's time was leader of the Senate party. He praised the legislation of the 2nd century, whereby the thief was made to pay back twice, but he who lent money on interest four times as much as he had 'taken'. Another generation before mine they made a law according to which a Senator had no right to trade. The law came too late, it was at once by-passed – one can do anything with laws, except stop trade – the law even led to the extension of the trading companies in which each of fifty partners owns a fiftieth of a ship, so that he can control fifty ships instead of a single one, but you can at any rate see where the tendency of these gentlemen was going. They were distinguished generals and quite capable of conquering Provinces, only they didn't know what to do with them then.

But as our trade grew out of its infancy and we began to export oil, wool and wines in greater quantity and to import grain and many other things, and especially as we wanted to export money and put it to work in the Provinces, these gentlemen showed their total highborn inability to move with the times, and the young City realised they lacked a rational leadership. You understand, we felt no desire at all to put ourselves on the battle horse, and to squander our time, which was money, on unpleasant seats of office; the gentlemen could peacefully remain what they were, but only under a solid leadership of the City.

9 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the banker, from three-quarters right.*

(lens 17.5; length 16m 70cm; c 1' 30")

The banker: You will grasp what I mean if you take as an example the Punic War. We had conducted it on the best grounds there are – namely, to beat down African competition; but what came of it? Our military men took away from Carthage not her products and tolls, but her walls and war-ships. They didn't fetch the corn, they fetched the plough. Our generals said proudly: Where my legions set foot, no grass grows any more. But what we were after was exactly this grass; you know, from one of these kinds of grass bread is made. What was conquered in the Punic War, at immense cost, was wastelands. These territories could well have fed our entire peninsulā, but for the triumphal procession in Rome they took everything away from them that they needed to be able to work for us, from the field implements to the field

slaves. And after such a conquest came a similar administration. The governors only wrote the figures in their own household books. One knows that no clothing has so many pockets as a general's coat. But the governors' clothes consisted altogether only of pockets. The gentlemen, when they set foot again on home soil, jangled with metal no less than if they had come in armour. Cornelius Dolabella and Publius Antonius, the figures against whom young C took up, had loaded half Macedonia on to their ships.

10 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the banker, front-view.*
(lens 25; length 7m 70cm; c 41")

The banker: Naturally, in such a way one couldn't set on its feet anything that could really be called trade. After every war there were insolvencies and suspensions of payments in Rome. Each victory of the troops was a defeat for the City. The triumphs of the generals were triumphs over the people. The cry of woe that arose after the battle of Zama, which ended the Punic War, was bilingual. It was the cry of woe of the Punic *and* of the Roman banks. The Senate slaughtered the milk cow. The system was rotten through and through.

11 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the banker, three-quarters front-view from the left.*
(lens 25; length 24m; 2' 10")

The banker: All this was the talk of the town in Rome. They chattered in every barber's booth about the moral rot of the Senate. They even chattered in the Senate itself about the 'necessity for a thorough moral regeneration'. Cato, the Younger, saw a black future for the 300 families. He resolved to do something for their good name, and in the cities subject to him as Governor he went out on foot and accompanied by a single servant, who carried the coat and paten after him; and when he returned home from his Spanish Governorship, he sold his battle horse in advance, because he didn't feel justified in putting the transport costs of the same to the account of the state. Unfortunately, his ship struck a storm; he was shipwrecked and lost his account books, and then lamented to the end of his days that he couldn't prove to anyone how decently he had conducted his affairs. He knew that his attitude was unbelievable. The City held for nothing 'setting a good example' and moralistic speeches. It saw clearly what was lacking: officials must be paid.

For the gentlemen performed their office for honour's sake: to take money for work seemed insulting to them. With such high ideals there was naturally nothing left to them but to steal. And they stole from corn tributes, and from road-making, and water from the state aqueducts.

The City was, as I said, not unreasonable. It put itself in touch with the merchants in the conquered Provinces and encouraged them to institute lawsuits. Thus, there were lawsuits. Cicero himself, the great trumpet of the City, conducted a few on behalf of Sicilian firms. But with time our gentlemen of the Senate got used to lawsuits, as one gets used to rain; one puts a coat on. Henceforth they no longer stole a lot from a few, but a little from many. And when lawsuits threatened, they stole all. To conduct lawsuits, money is needed. So from those they plundered they also stole the impending costs of the lawsuits.

12 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the banker's profile, a little more from the left.*

(lens 25; length 9m 70cm; c 49")

The banker: Then a couple of rich Democratic Clubs in Rome started financing suits against the Senatorial robbers, that is against the most shameless amongst them – those who hindered even Roman merchants in the Provinces in the management of their business. These lawsuits did bring a little discredit, and, what was perhaps still more important, young lawyers could work themselves in on the subject. For here it was not just a question of making a couple of witty speeches: the lawyer had to put up and coach witnesses, and he had to distribute the sums of money skilfully, so that the judicial mechanism was well oiled. We even got young lawyers from Senatorial families. In no other way could they study the administrative machinery better. One has to have bribed once to be able to let oneself be bribed properly.

13 *Medium close-shot, slight high-angle, track back along the axis – the Eclair is still in front of the bench: the banker and the young man, seated as before; the banker, this time on the right of the frame, in the foreground, is looking straight ahead, and the young man, this time in the middleground, to the left of the frame, is still turned towards the banker.*

(lens 9; length 12m 50cm; c 1' 8")

The banker: C lost both lawsuits. Some think because he was inefficient; I think because he was too efficient. The latter is suggested by the fact that afterwards he had to leave, in order, as he himself once expressed it to me directly, to get out of the way of the hostile atmosphere stirred up against him. He went to Rhodes, allegedly to perfect himself in the art of speaking. Since this motivation for a somewhat hasty departure doesn't sound exactly glorious for a young lawyer, one must presume that there were still other motives for the journey which would have sounded still less glorious.

It is true that as a lawyer one can in certain circumstances

earn more by losing a lawsuit than by winning it. But one shouldn't do this already with the very first suits one obtains. It was a weakness of this young man that he did nothing by halves. Presumably he wanted right from the beginning to be a real lawyer. He did just the same thing later with military leadership. I got white hair through it.

59

14 *Extreme close-shot, low-angle: the young man, from the front, to the right of the frame.*

(lens 17.5; length 92cm; c 5")

The young man: But he was considered rather early on as a coming man in the Democratic Party?

15 *Extreme close-shot, low-angle: the banker, right-hand profile, on the left of the frame.*

(lens 17.5; length 22m; c 2')

The banker: Yes, he was considered a coming man. He came for money. They were keen on names. His family belonged to the fifteen or sixteen oldest Patrician families of the town.

The young man (off): You cannot deny that it speaks for a Democratic disposition that he strictly rejected Sulla's demand that he divorce his first wife, Cornelia, because she was Cinna's daughter. Do you mean to say that he wasn't serious about that either?

The banker: Why shouldn't he have been serious about it? Cinna had made a pretty fortune in Spain.

The young man (off): That was confiscated.

The banker: Not from C. When that threatened he went with it and with Cornelia to Asia.

The young man (off): Then you think this refusal to part with Cornelia had nothing to do with political convictions. And no doubt love didn't come into consideration either? No doubt he couldn't love at all, in your view?

The banker: Why should I believe such a thing? It was just then that he was in love. A Syrian freedman. I have forgotten his name. Cornelia, if people are to be believed, was rather irritated about it. Already on the ship it came to unpleasant scenes, and the Syrian insisted that C divorce. Like Sulla. But C didn't give way to him either. He didn't, even if it should disappoint you, allow his heart to rule his head.

The young man (off): And the burial he prepared for her and his aunt?

The banker: That was political. In the funeral procession, he had wax masks of Marius and Cinna carried. He got 200,000 sesterii from the Democratic Party for it. His family, above all his mother, of whom I have told you – a very sensible woman – blamed him for it for a long time. 200,000 sesterii, that was no more than one paid for two good cooks. But the

Clubs found the payment sufficient, since there was no longer any danger attached to the demonstration: the Praetor was by then already a Democrat.

HILLSIDE ROAD, BEHIND THE VILLA ALDOBRANDINI

16 *Close-shot: the young man, from three-quarters left front, is walking, accompanied by the banker, off-screen on his left, the Eclair travelling with them.*

(lens 12.5; length 34m; c 3')

The banker (off): He always needed money. He had even tried the slave trade once. You have no doubt heard the story about the pirates? Would you mind repeating what you know of it? The young man: The young Caesar was captured by pirates near the island of Pharmacusa. They maintained considerable fleets and covered the sea with a large number of vessels. At first he scoffed at the pirates because they asked for no more than twenty talents ransom. Didn't they know whom they had caught? And he spontaneously offered to pay them fifty. And at once he sent a few companions to various towns to raise the money. With his physician, his cook and two manservants he remained behind with the murder-hungry Asians. He continued to treat them so contemptuously that whenever he lay down to sleep he ordered them to keep quiet. Thirty-eight days he spent in such a way that the ship's crew seemed to be his bodyguard, rather than he their captive. Without the least fear he joked and played with them. Now and then he even composed poems and speeches and read these to them; those who didn't admire them he called blockheads and barbarians, often laughingly threatened that he would have them hanged yet. The pirates amused themselves greatly over him and took his free speeches as charming jokes. But as soon as the ransom arrived from Miletus and he was set free, he manned a few vessels in the harbour of Miletus with armed men and put to sea against the pirates. He found them still lying at anchor off the island and overpowered most of them. Their riches he regarded as a legitimate booty, but they themselves he handed over to the prison of Pergamos and then proceeded to Junius, the Governor of Asia, to procure from him the punishment of his prisoners. But as Junius directed his whole attention towards what had been taken away from the pirates, which certainly came to an imposing sum, and hence gave the indecisive answer that at the moment he had no time to worry about the prisoners, Caesar, without further reference to him, went back to Pergamos and on his own authority had all the pirates nailed to the cross, as he had so often jestingly predicted to them on the island.

End of Reel 1 A

GARDEN TERRACE OF THE VILLA ALDOBRANDINI AT FRASCATI

17 *Medium close-shot, slight high-angle: the bench unoccupied for a moment; then the banker enters the frame, back-view from the left, and sits down where he was previously seated, but this time turning a little towards his right, where the young man has just sat down on a chair off-screen; his place on the bench, on the banker's right, remains unoccupied.*

(lens 17.5; length 13m 30cm; 1' 11")

The banker: Almost everything in his life already looks like that. I'll tell you what it was. It was the slave trade. The little affair falls in the period when C used the burial of his first wife and his aunt as a demonstration for Democracy, and immediately after he had instituted the lawsuits against the Senators' infractions in the Provinces. It had to do with his journey to Rhodes, where he wanted to learn speechmaking from a Greek. Our young lawyer liked to do several things at the same time. And, as mentioned, he needed money. So he took with him a shipload of slaves: if I remember, skilled Gallic leatherworkers that one could get rid of down there with profit. Naturally, it was smuggling.

18 *Long-shot: the Roman plain, seen from the terrace.*

(lens 9; length 15m; 1' 20")

The banker (off): The big slave traders of Asia Minor had old contracts with our harbours, as well as with the Greek and Syrian ones, which ensured them a monopoly of slave transport in both directions. The slave trade, you see, was a well-organised branch of affairs backed with much capital, Roman too. On the slave market in Delos up to ten thousand head were sometimes sold in a single day. The slave traders' connections with the traders of the capital were close and well-organised. Only later, when the City set on its feet its own slave trade, was there friction with the export trust of Asia Minor. Our toll farmers, under the protection of the Roman eagle and in deepest peacetime, arranged regular slave hunts in the Provinces of Asia Minor. The Cilician and Syrian firms resisted the competition, which they regarded as unfair, as well as they could. The struggle for slave monopoly soon led to a quite beautiful sea war. Transport ships were captured and slave cargoes confiscated in all directions. The Roman firms insulted the firms of Asia Minor and the pirates of Asia Minor the Roman ones.

19 *Extreme close-shot, slight high-angle: the banker as before.*

(lens 25; length 26m 80cm; 2' 26")

The banker: C went in winter, when because of the storms

one was safer from the corsair ships of Asia Minor. But they still captured him. His cargo was taken away from him, and he was put in custody. As you know from the history books, he was treated with the utmost delicacy. They left him his doctor and his manservants, and even listened patiently to his poems. The good people of Asia Minor even put up with this brutality and remained polite. He only had to pay the sum of damages, which was calculated according to the size of the smuggled cargo. It was twenty talents.

The rest of what I'm now telling you I have from the Proconsul Junius, who at the time officiated down there, and whom I got to know as an old man. He investigated the affair, because a big scandal blew up.

C then turned, through messengers, to the towns of Asia Minor for the money. He concealed the fact that it was a matter of damages for slave trading, and maintained that it was ransom extorted by pirates. And he asked not for twenty talents, but fifty. They were raised. He never paid them back. Freed, he journeyed to Miletus, manned a couple of ships with gladiator slaves, and took back from the Asians the 'ransom' as well as his slave cargo. Moreover, he dragged to Pergamos not only the crew of the Asian corsair ship, but also some slave traders who had sent it out, as well as all stocks of slaves that he found with them. Summoned by Junius to explain himself, he demanded that the Asians be treated one and all as pirates; and when Junius refused him this and enquired far too persistently for further details of the case, he journeys under cover of darkness to Pergamos and by forged orders had the Asians nailed to the cross so they could testify nothing against him. In addition, because he had pulled a fast one over the terrible 'pirates', by jokingly threatening them with crucifixion and then crucifying them in earnest, he managed to acquire a reputation for humour with the historians; quite unwarranted. He didn't have a grain of humour. But he had initiative.

20 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the young man seated on a chair, a little to the right of the banker (off-screen) but turned towards him.*

(lens 9; length 2m; 11")

The young man: I don't understand how by then he already had the power for all that.

21 *Extreme close-shot, low-angle: the banker, from in front.*

(lens 17.5; length 9m 50cm; 50")

The banker: He had no more power than any puppy from a Senatorial family. They did what they wanted.

You should not lose sight of the fact that C had merchants

hanged here if you want to measure what difficulties Junius had as a result of this. It was then not yet the case that the firms of Asia Minor could officially be named pirates. They are now called that in the history books. Since those are written by us, we could naturally bring our own view of things into play. But even then a moral campaign against the Asians had been started in Rome with a heap of money; it was maintained that they were procuring their wares in an unlawful way – indeed, some even went so far as to reproach them for inhuman treatment of their wares. 63

Seven frames black film

22 As 21.

(lens 17.5; length 3m; 16")

The banker: At the same time it is clear that the wares seized by the governors in campaigns suffered far more in transportation: to the military it was all the same how many head arrived. The traders on the other hand lost money with each man, and thus provided for sanitary freighting.

Fifteen frames black film

23 As 21.

(lens 17.5; length 14m 30cm; 1' 18")

The banker: But only years after the little incident we are speaking about did the Roman firms succeed in making their cause Rome's cause. They helped the mood in the Forum somewhat by having a few Roman grain ships opportunely captured by some sort of Greek freebooters. Only then could they scream for state help and demand the application of the pirate law. But the City didn't get the Roman fleet of war for its struggle against competition with the Asians without struggles. In this too, moreover, C played a role, even if a discreet one. When in the year 87 the People's Tribune Gabinius demanded from the Senate on behalf of the City that the Roman war fleet be given over to Pompey to fight the 'pirates', he was nearly lynched by milords the landowners. They had long-term contracts with the Asians, and could tolerate no interruption or reduction of slave imports; their giant estates were not manageable without slaves. They had no wish to give the City a monopoly in slave imports. They feared monopoly prices.

Twenty-four frames black film

24 As 21.

(lens 17.5; length 22m 40cm; 2')

The banker: The City called upon the people. The Democratic Clubs went into action. Naturally, it didn't happen without a little demagoguery. To the people one must speak in popular style. They emphasised (C, too, was among the orators) the cheap slave prices of the firms of Asia Minor, through which Roman artisans were deprived of bread.

Among the small farmers bitterness at the Senate's opposition was quite universal. The use of slaves by the large estates weighed horribly on the small peasant holdings. They hoped to be able to throttle not only the slave traders of Asia Minor, but also the whole slave trade. In Etruria, the Senate had to put in the army against raging peasants.

The municipal proletariat, too, suffered from the fact that the entrepreneurs were ruining artisans' wages with cheap slave labour. However, the scales were turned for them by the fact that the slave import firms, young and strong in capital, brought about a small rise in corn prices and spread it about that the pirates were obstructing the import of corn. And, naturally, money was poured out on all sides. Pompey, like the other lictors, was always preceded by men with sealed envelopes. So the people only laughed, at the people's assembly, when old Catulus of the Senate, after a flowery enumeration of Pompey's merits, beseeched that such a man be not exposed to the dangers of a war; and when he cried in despair: 'Whom will you have left if you lose this one?', they shouted, grinning, 'You!' And when another speaker warned them of handing over such power to a single man, they raised such a shriek that a raven which was flying over the market fell stunned by it into the assembly. It was probably on its way to fetch its share of the public money.

Fifteen frames black film

25 As 21.

(lens 17.5; length 6m 50cm; c 34")

The banker: Yet the whole fuss would have been of no use had they not pressed into the hands of a dozen Senators a heap of shares in the slave import firms. Only now did the affair become a national affair, and Pompey get the fleet of war for the City. The price of corn fell by half, in three months the sea was cleaned of Asian competition, and immediately thereupon Pompey, through a mere amendment, so to speak, got the supreme command in Asia. *He fetched the slaves.*

Five frames black film

26 As 21.

(lens 17.5; length 17m 60cm; 1' 35")

The banker: You understand, the little man voted twice in succession for the same man. But he didn't do the same thing twice. His naval war could pass as a blow against the slave trade, but his land war signified slave trade on the largest scale. Half a year later the slave market in Rome was flooded out, this time by Roman firms. Moreover, Cicero made his maiden speech at that time. He spoke for conferring the supreme command on Pompey. You can work out for yourself where he got his honorarium. 65

ABOVE TERENCE IN THE PROVINCE OF BOLZANO

27 *At first, close-shot of a small stream rushing down; the Eclair soon pans towards the left, ascends the course of the stream, glides over the summit of Monte Gruppo; comes down again, continuing its pan left, and stops on a little watermill entirely made of wood: an old peasant is standing on the threshold, and the young man is stationed in front of him.*
(lens 12.5; length 8m; 43")

Synch noises

28 *Close-shot: the peasant.*
(lens 17.5; length 80cm; 4½")

The peasant: I saw him only twice in ten years. What do you want to know about him?

29 *Medium close-shot: the young man.*
(lens 25; length 20cm; 1")

The young man: Were you in Gaul with him?

30 *Medium close-shot: the peasant.*
(lens 17.5; length 6m; 32")

The peasant: Yes, Sir, we were with him. Three legions, Sir.

The young man (off): Did you see him from close to?

The peasant: 500 paces once, 1,000 paces the other time. Once, if you want to know exactly, at a parade in Lucus, which meant four hours extra drill. The other time at the embarkation for Britannia.

The young man (off): He was much loved?

The peasant: He was considered smart.

The young man (off): But the simple man had confidence in him?

The peasant: The provisions were not bad. He saw to that, so they said.

31 *Medium close-shot: the young man.*
(lens 25; length 30cm; 1½")

The young man: Were you in the Civil War?

66 32 *Medium close-shot: the peasant.*

(lens 17.5; length 3m 50cm; 18")

The peasant: Oh yes. On Pompey's side.

The young man (off): How so?

The peasant: I belonged to the legion he had squeezed out of Pompey. He gave it back before the Civil War broke out.

The young man (off): I see.

The peasant: Tough luck. I lost my indemnity. And he paid very decent indemnities. But I could not choose.

33 *Close-shot: the young man.*

(lens 12.5; length 70cm; 4")

The young man: Why did you become a soldier?

The peasant (off): Long ago, Sir.

The young man: Don't you know any more?

34 *Extreme close-shot: the peasant.*

(lens 25; length 13m 50cm; 1' 13")

The peasant: You are a stubborn one. I went into the army because I was recruited. My home is in the region of Setia, if that means anything to you. A Latin. If I hadn't been a Roman citizen, they wouldn't have been able to recruit me.

The young man (off): Would you rather have stayed where your home is?

The peasant: That, no. We were already four boys. That was too many for the couple of hides of land. Nor could we hire ourselves out to one of the larger estates, for they rather took freedmen, who couldn't be recruited; and besides, they had their slaves.

The young man (off): Are your brothers still on the farm?

The peasant: How should I know? Hardly likely, Sir. With the corn prices. You have Sicilian corn in Italy, you see. That's so much cheaper. Already in my day even the troops were fed only with Sicilian corn.

The young man (off): And you yourself have looked for land again only now?

The peasant: Yes, with my years one is not a soldier any more. Yes, the land question was not solved, and it will never be solved. Impossible.

35 *Close-shot: the young man.*

(lens 17.5; length 5m 30cm; 28")

The young man: Your business isn't very great now either, is it?

The peasant (off): We little men can't keep up. For that one needs slaves.

The young man: Did you hear anything of the Democratic Clubs in your youth?

The peasant (off): I think so. When I was in the capital. I 67
voted once. But whether it was for the Democratic Praetor,
I don't know any more. I got fifty sestertii – a lot of money.
The young man: I think the Democrats were for settling the
land question?

36 *Medium close-shot: the peasant.*

(lens 9; length 7m; 38")

The peasant: Really?

Weren't they for granting free corn to the unemployed?

The young man (off): That too.

The peasant: But that's precisely what ruined the price of corn.

The young man (off): But if one was in the town, as you were
at that time, it was still good to get cheap bread?

The peasant: Yes, in the town it was necessary. There one was
unemployed.

The young man (off): Only for your people in Latium, you
think, it was a bad thing; there the low price of corn ruined
everything?

The peasant: Yes, that and the many slaves. We were fetching
them now. From Gaul, and so on. Difficult, eh? Politics.

The young man (off): What did Caesar look like, then?

The peasant: Worn out.

37 *Close-shot: the water of the stream.*

(lens 12.5; length 1m; 6")

Synch noises

End of Reel 1 B

Reel 2 A

38 *Tracking shot: the young man, from behind, at the wheel
of his car – the Eclair is behind him in the car – starting from
the vicolo dei Baulari, he crosses the Campo dei Fiori, turns
right into the via dei Cappellari, follows it right to the end, then
takes – on his left – the via del Pellegrino, crosses the piazza
della Moretta (market on the left), and goes along the via dei
Banchi Vecchi as far as the largo Tassoni.*

(lens 9; length 115m; 10' 20")

Synch noises

BALCONY-TERRACE OF THE MINGRONES' FLAT IN ROME, PIETRALATA

39 *Medium close-shot/medium long-shot, slight low-angle:
the young man, standing in profile to the left of the frame in
the foreground, leaning sideways on his left hip against the
central balustrade of the balcony, and turned towards the jurist,
standing full-face, to the right of the frame in the middleground,
leaning with his back against the lateral balustrade at the other*

68 *end of the balcony and turned towards the young man.*
(lens 9; length 19m; 1' 42")

The jurist Afranius Carbo: It's a rotten habit of you young people to laugh when the subject of the ideals that trade has brought to the world comes up. You are only imitating the sneering of a few high-born idlers. Is heroism only seen in war? If yes, is trade not a war? Words like 'peaceful trading' may inspire ambitious young merchants; they have no place in history. Trade is never peaceful. Boundaries which commodities cannot cross are crossed by troops. Among the wool-spinner's tools is not only the loom, but also the catapult. And in addition, trade still has its own war. An unbloody war, yes, but nevertheless a deadly one, I think. The hunger for bread kills those that have it and those that don't have it. And not only does the hunger for bread kill, but also the appetite for oysters. In spite of this it is true to say that trade brought a certain humane touch to human relations. It must have been in the brain of the trader that the first peaceful thought arose – the idea of the utility of mild action. You understand, the idea that in an unbloody way one could secure greater advantages than in a bloody one. In fact, a sentence of death by starvation is somewhat milder than the sentence of death by the sword. Just as the lot of a milk cow is a more pleasant one than that of a fattened swine. A trader must have hit upon the thought that one can get more out of a man than just his entrails. But don't forget in all this that 'live and let live', the great humane maxim, surely still means 'live' for the milk drinker, and 'let live' for the cow.

40 *Close-shot: the jurist, to the left of the frame.*
(lens 17.5; length 40m; 3' 36")

The jurist: And when you consider history, what conclusion do you reach? If ideals can only be taken seriously once blood has flowed for them, then ours, those of Democracy, must be taken very seriously. A lot of blood flowed for them. Tiberius Gracchus was slain for them by Senators' sons with chair legs; three hundred of ours with him. None of the dead showed traces of iron weapons. Their corpses were thrown into the Tiber. The Senatorial general Manius Aquillius had offered a whole Province of Asia Minor for sale to the kings of Pontus and Bythinia. The Pontine one offered more, and the Senate ratified the sale. 'There are three tendencies in the Senate,' said Gracchus. 'The first is for the sale; it is bribed by the King of Pontus. The second is against the sale; it is bribed by the King of Bythinia. The third is silent; it is bribed by both kings.' The Senate answered him with the chair legs. That was in 620 – more than a century ago, then.

Thirteen years later Gaius Gracchus insisted that the grain requisitioned in the Spanish Provinces be paid for, peasants be sent as colonisers to conquered Africa, Italians be accepted as citizens, taxes instead of tributes be imposed in the Provinces, the State income be controlled by businessmen – and a horde of Senators chased him, down the slope to the bank of the Tiber. He sprained a foot, had himself stabbed by his slave in a park in the suburbs so as not to fall into their hands. His head was cut off and paid for by a Senator. Twenty-one years passed: in them the Italian peasant and the Roman artisan beat the slave bands of Sicily, Jugurtha's Numidian troops, the Cimbrians and the Teutons; and one December day in 654 the Democrats were driven together into the Market, and then up to the Capitol, where their water was cut off so that they had to surrender. They were cooped up in the town hall, young noblemen clambered onto the roof, took off the tiles and smashed the prisoners' heads with them. Then the Italian peasant and the Roman artisan conquered half Asia and Egypt as well, and it was time for a new blood-letting. Sulla undertook it, and this time the work was thorough. Four thousand of ours, counting modestly – that is, counting only the wealthy, only those who belonged to the City. I am not speaking of such butcheries as the one after the battle at the Porta Collina, where three thousand prisoners were led to the town farmhouse in the Campus Martius, and were slaughtered down to the last man, so that in the nearby Temple of Bellona, where Sulla was just then holding a sitting of the Senate, the clanking of weapons and the groans of the dying could be clearly heard. And the affair was not at an end: neither the agitation, nor the throttling of the agitation. Just eight years before the time of Catilina's rebellion, the Democratic general Sertorius was cut down by Senators as he was eating. Two held his arms, and one stuck his sword through his throat.

All that had passed, but none of it had been forgotten, when Caius Julius again raised the Democratic banners. Every paving stone of Rome was drenched with the blood of the people. My father could still show me the place where they had chased Caius Gracchus. Two stunted cypresses stood there, I can still see them in front of me.

41 As 39.

(lens 9; length 6m 50cm; 35")

The jurist: We have forgotten that we are plebeians. You are, Spicer is, and I am. Don't say that it doesn't matter any more today. Precisely that is what was achieved: that it doesn't matter any more today. That's Caesar for you. Compared to that, what are the couple of old-style battles, the couple of

shaky contracts with a couple of chiefs of native tribes that he may have made!

The City was a creation of the Gracchi. It was they who handed over to trade the taxes and tolls of the two Asias. It was the ideas of the Gracchi that Caius Julius took up. The fruit was: Imperium.

SANT ANDREA, ISLAND OF ELBA

42 *Long-shot to medium close-shot: the Casetta 'Kathrien' amongst other houses in the hillside, overhanging a cove on the Island of Elba. The Eclair is in a boat on the water, and suddenly zooms in on the Casetta 'Kathrien'.*
(lens: zoom; length 4m 70cm; 25")

Synch noises

43 *Close-shot: the writer only, seated on a chaise-longue on the terrace – overhanging the sea – of the Casetta 'Kathrien'.*
(lens 25; length 32m; 2' 52")

The writer Vastius Alder: And yet, that's how everything was done. At the appropriate time, when investigations on account of embezzled money were threatening, one always repeated the threat of the foul air from below, mumbled something about revolution, made a vague gesture in the direction of the suburbs. The police understood then, and became more tactful. An incidental mention of the hungry masses (in terse military prose), and the Senate hailed again. One was naturally against this stinking tide oneself; one wiped off with disgust the dirt that had splashed on one's toga. One knew that they would use their 'liberation' to set their crippled bastards on the Vestal Virgins' laps, to grow radishes instead of chrysanthemums in the glasshouses, to seal the holes in their barracks with priceless Greek canvases, to shit on grammar – always excused by a couple of literati on account of their neglected education. One knew, all that; one had Greek culture. One knew, but one had to make politics. One made politics until in the end one had got the deluge into the curia, or at least its foam; by no means the hungry peasants, only their tormentors, the usurers. By no means the bankrupt artisans, only the mortgage-holders. No, the gentleman didn't forget 'misery', the great Democrat remembered the 'despair of the pauperised'. What else could he have blackmailed the pauperisers with? The Senate was too small. It had to be enlarged. The privileged robbers were too few; they had to be supplemented by unprivileged robbers. Under the threatening eye of the dictator, those to whom their police had brought the stolen goods shook hands with those who had fetched them for themselves. What of the leprosy one had promised to keep

down, to exclude, to decimate, for so many sealed envelopes? Now was it not somewhat decimated when it streamed into the curia? Was it not only a small part of all the leprosy? It was surely only that part of the leprosy that could jingle with money. A very small part. But strong. And loud. One must shout if one wants to bargain. Look at his Senate: a market hall.

44 *Long-shot: the coast again, and the Casetta 'Kathrien' in the distance, with the sea.*

(lens: zoom; length 70cm; 4")

Synch noises

End of Reel 2 A

Reel 2 B

45 *Tracking shot: the young man, from behind, at the wheel of his car, goes down the vicolo della Frusta, turns right into the vicolo del Cedro, takes – on the left – the via del Mattonato, which he goes along until the via Garibaldi, where he turns right, goes down until the via della Scala on the right, follows it until the piazza S Egidio, turns left into the vicolo del Bologna, drives until the piazzetta S G Malva, crosses it towards the left to enter the via di S Dorotea and then follow it until the via di Porta Settimiana.*

(lens 9; length 118m; 10' 39")

Synch noises

GARDEN-TERRACE OF THE VILLA ALDOBRANDINI AT FRASCATI

46 *Close-shot, slight high-angle: the banker, from the front, to the left of the frame, seated as before at the end of his bench – the Eclair is to his left – and in front of him, a little to his right, he has a table.*

(lens 12.5; length 4m; 22")

The banker: The Catilina affair brought C on top. It is true that it brought the Democratic 'Party' to the dogs, but equally it brought him on top in the Party. The defeat was huge, but if they still wanted something from the defeated they had to come to him. He even took the kicks.

47 *Medium close-shot, slight high-angle: the young man, right-hand profile a little from behind, at the left of the frame, seated on his chair at the other side of the table, approximately opposite the banker, with a glass of wine in front of him at the right of the frame.*

(lens 12.5; length 28m; 2' 32")

The banker (off): The Democratic cause had really gone to the dogs. The Senate had accepted that the City's repression should cost something. Corn outlay for the unemployed

devoured yearly an eighth of the state's budget – twenty-five million sestertii. But the money wasn't thrown away, not to mention the fact that it wasn't its own. The increase in the state income through the Asiatic conquests came to more than double. The City's share of it had been considerably decreased. And 'great' Pompey now had to consider whether he could really venture to ask the Senate for more than a triumph. The Democratic organisations, on which he could still have leaned in the Autumn, were in ruins. The City had betrayed the little man according to all the rules of the art, except the one that prescribes that the victim shall not notice anything. After the definitive, brutal extermination of the Catilinans, a change of mood had occurred in the broad masses. The victors of Pistoria told of the bravery of the desperate insurgents, in whose packs not a crust of bread had been found. They told it in run-down, fungus-ridden tenement houses, and to people who were in the hands of the banks or else possessed nothing at all. And the insurrection had been fought by the Democrat Cicero, and for this honour had 'great Pompey' contended with him.

Pompey had become unpopular. But the Senate had the power. The police of the capital was doubled; its dossiers were lined with compromising documents. The street clubs were completely dissolved, even the gladiators' teams were dissolved. Everywhere in Italy the Senate could muster fresh and trustworthy legions from the peasantry, when it seemed necessary. The peasants had no interest in a solution to the land question which consisted of hanging the town's unemployed around their necks as competition. As if the insane slave imports of this Pompey hadn't already been enough!

48 *Close-shot/extreme close-shot, slight low-angle: the banker, three-quarters front view, less to the left of the frame. (lens 17.5; length 6m; 33")*

The banker: And the City was as bankrupt as it was possible for it to be. The City longed more than ever for Pompey. It urgently needed a 'strong man'. It expected real energy from him. The forum resounded with his fame. His genius is proven, said the bankers, he showed it in Asia. If he put an end to Mithridates, why should he not put an end to our Cato? The man has a reputation to lose.

49 *Close-shot, slight low-angle: the young man, a little less to the left of the frame. (lens 17.5; length 14m; 1' 15")*

The banker (off): Naturally C too was waiting for Pompey. If Pompey came with his legions, there would be no police inquiries into the January events, which would have to set

in at once if he resigned his office with the police, in the Autumn. The moment he ceased to be the judge, he was the criminal. So he was spying out for the dictator Pompey. But the great Pompey shrouded himself in silence. He was winding up his Asian affairs, and seemed to have no idea of politics. He was still making contracts with the City concerning taxes and toll farming. Of course, they required sanction from the Senate, but he would certainly come with his legions, and contracts which were the heart's desire of victorious legions could not be bad. The City displayed a cheerful, trustful air. But the quotations of Asiatic values were remarkably low. If you want to know the City's true views on war reports, you have to read its stock market reports.

50 Close-shot/medium close-shot, slight low-angle: the banker, front profile, a little to the right of frame, with the fountain of the villa in the background.

(lens 17.5; length 20m; 1' 48")

The banker: Pompey came not with his legions, but without them. At the beginning of the year 92 no one would have thought this possible of the great conqueror of the two Asias. Crassus, in deadly dispute with Pompey since their joint consulate, had already fled before him to Macedonia in the Summer. Even the Senate expected all kinds of comings and goings from Pompey, who had landed at Brindisium with a giant fleet, when Crassus reappeared on the Forum. When C saw him, he knew that Pompey would come without troops. Crassus had his connections.

C sent for me that same afternoon. He was standing by a statue of Minerva, and was giving a dozen slaves orders to pack. He said: 'Pompey will come back as a private individual. Crassus is back again. I am thinking of travelling off to my Province.'

C left Rome in such haste that he didn't even seek the Senate's instructions regarding the strength, equipment and wages of his troops. I believe the reputation of his 'magically fast journey' was spread by his many creditors. But he didn't leave Rome without seeking the instructions of the Pulcher group. It was in charge of the settlement of the Etrurian iron mines' war supplies business with Pompey's army. These mines, Italy's largest, were pretty much exhausted. C's administration of Spain was in fact the first to succeed according to reasonable – that is, businesslike – points of view.

51 Close-shot/extreme close-shot, slight low-angle: the young man, three-quarters front-view, approximately in the centre of the screen.

(lens 25; length 38m; 3' 26")

The banker (off): From the historians you cannot readily apprehend that. For certain reasons, mainly so that C could celebrate a triumph, he had to present the whole thing as a war. They spoke of a war against mountain people who carried out thieving raids in the valleys. There was talk of a population that left its towns to flee into the mountains, and which had to be brought back. That's the usual style of governors' reports. C's procedure was far more interesting.

The main point, the really new thing, was that he treated Spanish businessmen not only as Spaniards, but also as businessmen. He supported them, where he could, even against their own countrymen. In the first place, the pacification of Spain had above all to be accomplished. To this end no means should be shunned, not even the most powerful.

His most famous civilising measure consisted of the resettlement of the Lusitanian mountain population in the river valleys. The Lusitanian merchants complained bitterly about the absolute lack of labour power in the silver, copper and iron mines. The mountain inhabitants preferred a contemplative pastoral life in the highlands to work in the mines. The industrialists pointed out quite rightly that on these inaccessible plateaus they were very successfully avoiding the clutches of the tax officials.

For decades the Roman governors had taken no notice of the complaints of domestic trade, and had not taken sides in the struggle of the Lusitanian bourgeoisie with the stubborn pastoral population. The mountain people stood on a very low rung of civilisation. There were scarcely any slaves. One was not in a position, without foreign help, to exploit the important ore deposits, partly because of primitive machinery, partly because of the lack of suitable labour power.

However, the invasion of his Roman troops followed only when, after C's arrival, it became known that in these regions even human sacrifices were offered. The liquidation of such barbarous conditions called for speedy and merciless intervention. It may lead to loss of human life, but will be worth it in the end. Those Roman cohorts who, in the absence of any roads, thinking it was a dried up river bed, marched into an arm of the sea and were washed away by the rising tide with all war equipment and baggage, didn't lose their lives in vain. On the same slopes stand today the villas of native and Roman merchants; and the mountain valleys, which at that time were filled with the noise of weapons and the moans of the wounded, resound today once more with peaceful hammering in the ore quarries and the merry cries of the slaves.

the banker, in full profile, approximately on the right of the frame, with the Villa in the background.

(lens 25; length 26m 80cm; 2' 25")

The banker: The short war did not pass without blood, and not all of C's operations were fortunate. But he was not unloved by the soldiers. The gratuities he handed out were decent. And he could with a good conscience demand a triumph in Rome, and to make up the required five thousand enemy killed he didn't, like certain other generals, have to count all the civilians who'd lost their lives.

The Roman cohorts fought in this war shoulder to shoulder with native cohorts; a third of the troops consisted of Lusitanians. The relations of the Roman tax farmers, and thereby of the City, with the native bourgeoisie were also the most cordial imaginable. With the help of the Pulcher group, C succeeded in obtaining tax rebates for his Province by proving that the country had suffered through his war operations. Before the auctioning of the tax concessions he brought about a settlement between the various competitors and the Pulcher group, so that the usual outbidding was prevented. He left the mines in the hands of the native trade, and obtained for the Lusitanians a moratorium on their debts. He found a bearable mode by which the native industry was placed in a position to continue working, and to work off its debts through a full employment of the country's labour power. Two thirds of the output of the mines currently went to the City.

The campaign in the mountains had yielded a rich booty in slaves. But naturally, that did not settle the matter. The former shepherds, used to the lazy life in the highlands, left the towns again and again, and had to be brought back by force. C did what he could.

His success was epoch-making, and contributed more than anything else to making the new system popular. Despite the lowered tax assessments, the income of the Empire was constantly increasing, and the City had every reason to be satisfied. It got ore – as much as it wanted. Today, it employs more than 40,000 slaves in the mines, and fetches in its forty-five million sestertii a year from the silver mines.

53 Close-shot, more pronounced low-angle: the young man from in front, to the right of the frame, in the lower corner.

(lens 9; length 16m; 1' 27")

The banker (off): But C's share from the pacification of the Province was also correspondingly satisfactory. The historians are disunited as to what he actually earned. Brandus believes he only took money at all because it was up to him to have tangible proof of the Spaniards' enthusiastic gratitude for his unselfishness. He emphasises that C accepted voluntary dona-

tions exclusively. Nepos believes that people at the head of troops are too proud to beg, and assumes that he ordered the donations. Some say he took the money from his enemies; others, from his allies. Some, it consisted of tributes; others, of shares in the silver mines. Some, he was paid in Spain; others, in Rome. All of them are right. As everyone knows, C could do several things at once. He made about thirty-five million sestertii in a single year. When he came back, another man came back. He had shown what was hidden inside him. He had also shown what was hidden in a Province. And his historic saying that he would rather be the first in Spain than the second in Rome was justified.

54 *Extreme close-shot, low-angle: the banker, rear profile, to the right of the frame.*

(lens 26; length 1m; 5")

The banker: My confidence in him had proved well-founded.
Our small bank was no small bank any more.

FOUNTAIN IN THE VIA GIULIA IN ROME

55 *Long-shot to extreme close-shot, low-angle: at first framing the fountain in its surroundings, with a tree above on the left, and the wall of a house on the right, the Eclair moves in at once, quickly and without any change in angle, to the stone face of the woman, which is spouting water.*

(lens: zoom; length 14m; 1' 16")

Music: J S Bach: *Passion According to Saint Matthew*,

BWV 244. No 33, vivace (bars 40-72)

Coro I and II

Open your fiery pit, o Hell;

Wreck, ruin, engulf, shatter

With sudden force

The false betrayer, the murderous blood!

Synch sound of the fountain and the street

56 *Titles in black lettering on a grey background (pan):*

Gottfried Bold

the banker

Johann Unterpertinger

the peasant

Henri Ludwig

the jurist

Carl Vaillant

the writer

Benedikt Zulauf

the young man

Sounds of the fountain and the street (continued)

- 1 *Fountain in the via Giulia: a woman's face spouting water from her mouth.*

Synch noises of fountain and street

- 2 *Jean-Marie Straub, on the Giannicolo.*

Straub: In the scores of his dramas and his operas Arnold Schoenberg describes what and how everything should happen on the stage. He even describes noises. 'I wanted,' he says in a letter to Anton Webern, 'to leave as little as possible to the new rulers of the theatrical art, the producers, and also to think out the choreography as far as it is possible for me. For all this is in a very bad state today, and the almightiness of these auxiliary organs and their lack of conscience are exceeded only by their lack of culture and their impotence.' But in the score of the *Accompaniment to a Cinematograph Scene*, Schoenberg only gives the heading: 'Threatening danger, fear, catastrophe.' Otherwise unrepresentable, the cinematograph scene consists only of the so-called accompaniment.

- 3 *Arnold Schoenberg's face, 1926 (photograph by Man Ray).*

Straub (off): Threatening danger, fear, catastrophe.

Schoenberg wrote this music from October 15, 1929 to February 14, 1930. Scarcely four years later he had to leave Europe, and he died on July 13, 1951 in Los Angeles. . . .

- 4 *Arnold Schoenberg's profile, 1951 (one of the last photographs).*

Straub (off): . . . in exile.

Twenty frames black film

- 5 *Arnold Schoenberg's back: the camera pans downwards. He is walking in the street, his hands behind his back (self-portrait of 1911).*

Straub (off): Born in Vienna in 1874, he had until 1933 shared his life between Vienna and Berlin.

Threatening danger, fear, catastrophe.

In 1923 the painter Wassily Kandinsky, already a close friend of Schoenberg before the First World War, had urged

him to come to Weimar to help found at the Bauhaus there an artistic intellectual centre. Schoenberg answered him:

6 *Günther Peter Straschek in the radio studio, reading from a sheet of paper.*

Straschek: It cannot be. For that which I have been forced to learn in the last year I have now finally understood, and shall not ever forget. That is, that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely a human being (at least the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but that I am a Jew.

I am satisfied with it! Today I no longer at all wish to be an exception; I have nothing at all against being thrown together with all others in one pot. For I have seen that on the other side (which indeed to me is far from exemplary) everything is also in one pot. I have seen that one with whom I thought myself on a level has sought the community of the pot; I have heard that even a Kandinsky sees only bad in the actions of the Jews, and in their bad actions only the Jewishness, and there I give up hope of understanding. It was a dream. We are two kinds of human beings. Definitely!

7 *Title, white on black:*

Mödling, 20 IV 1923

Mödling, 4 V 1923

8 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: When I walk in the street and all men look to see if I am a Jew or a Christian, I cannot tell everyone that I am the one whom Kandinsky and some others make an exception of, while doubtless Hitler is not of this opinion. Which good opinion wouldn't be of much use to me, even if I were, like blind beggars, to write it on a board and hang it on my breast so that everyone can read it. Must a Kandinsky not consider that? Must a Kandinsky not suspect what really happened – that I had to interrupt my first working summer for five years, leave the place where I had sought peace for work, and could no longer be in a state to find the peace for it? Because the Germans do not tolerate any Jew! Should a Kandinsky be of a more similar opinion with others than with me? But should he have even a single thought in common with HUMAN BEINGS who are in a position to disturb me in my calm of work? Is it a thought that one can have in common with such people? And: can it be right? It seems to me: not even geometry should Kandinsky have in common with them! That is not his position, or he does not belong to me!

I ask: why does one say that the Jews are like their

marketeers are? Does one also say that the Aryans are like their worst elements? Why does one measure Aryans after Goethe, Schopenhauer and so on? Why does one not say that the Jews are like Mahler, Altenberg, Schoenberg and many others? 79

Fifteen frames black film

9 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: Every Jew reveals through his hooked nose not only his own guilt, but also that of all those with hooked noses who happen to be absent. But when a hundred Aryan criminals are together, one will be able to read only their predilection for alcohol from their noses, but for the rest will take them for men of honour. And there you join in and 'reject me as a Jew'! Did I offer myself to you, then? Do you think that someone like myself lets himself be rejected? Do you think that one who knows his worth grants anyone the right to criticise even his most insignificant qualities? And who might it be who would have this right? Wherein would he be better? Yes, behind my back, where there's plenty of room, everyone may criticise me. But if I hear it, then he lays himself open to my retaliation, with no mercy. How can a Kandinsky approve of my being insulted; how can he take part in politics that will create the possibility of excluding me from my natural sphere of activity; how can he refrain from fighting a view of the world whose aim is St Bartholomew's nights in whose darkness the little notice-board that I am excepted. . . .

Eighty-three frames black film

Straschek (off): . . . no one will be able to read!

Beginning of 'Accompaniment to a Cinematograph Scene', running continuously until shot 34.

10 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: You will call it a regrettable individual case if I too am struck by the consequences of the anti-semitic movement.

131 frames black film

Straschek (off): But it is not an individual case, that is, not accidental. No, it is part of a plan. . . .

11 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: . . . that, after first not being respected in the customary way, I now in addition have to go the long way round through politics. Naturally, these people to whom my music and my thoughts were uncomfortable, they could only

rejoice that now one more possibility is being shown of getting rid of me for the time being. My artistic success is indifferent to me, you know that. But I don't let myself be insulted!

What have I to do with Communism? I am not one and was not one. What have I to do with the Elders of Zion? For me that is the title of a tale out of the *Thousand and One Nights*, but one which doesn't signify anything approximately so worthy of belief.

Shouldn't I too know something of the Elders of Zion? Or do you think that I owe my discoveries, my knowledge and skill to Jewish protection? Or does Einstein owe his to the command of the Elders of Zion? I don't understand it. All this certainly won't stand up to serious examination. And shouldn't you have had occasion in the War to notice how much, indeed how exclusively officially one lies? How for our brain orientated towards objectivity the prospect of truth closes for all time. Did you not know that, or have you forgotten it? Have you also forgotten what evil a particular form or feeling is in a position to call forth? Don't you know that in peace-time everyone was horrified at a railway accident with four dead, and that during the War one could hear talk of 100,000 dead without even trying to imagine the misery, the pain, the fear and the consequences. Yes, that there were people who rejoiced over the most possible dead enemies; the more, the more so! I am no pacifist; to be against war is as pointless as to be against death. Both are inevitable, depend only in the slightest degree upon us.

Ten frames black film

12 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: In the same way the inversion now taking place in the social structure isn't on the guilt account of any individual. It is written in the stars and takes place with necessity. The bourgeoisie was already too orientated towards ideals, no longer capable of fighting, and therefore the miserable but robust elements are rising out of the depths of mankind to generate a new middle class, capable of existing. This one will buy itself a book on bad paper and starve. So and not otherwise must it come – can one overlook this?

And this you want to stop. For this you want to make the Jews answerable? I don't understand it! Are all Jews Communists? You know as well as I that this is not the case.

Ten frames black film

13 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: The Jews do business as merchants. But when they

become uncomfortable to competition, they are attacked; 81
only not as merchants, but as Jews. As what should they
defend themselves? But I am convinced that they do defend
themselves only as merchants, and the defence as Jews is
only an apparent one. Ie that their Aryan attackers when
attacked defend themselves in the same way, even though
with a few other words and by employing other (more con-
genial???) forms of hypocrisy; and that for the Jews the point
is not at all to beat Christian competition, but all competi-
tion! and that for the Aryans in the same way it also has to
do with all competition; and that every connection which leads
to the goal is thinkable between them, and every other anti-
thesis. Today it is race; another time I don't know what. And
there a Kandinsky joins in?

202 frames black film

Straschek (off): But where should anti-semitism lead, if not
to violent deeds? Is it so hard to imagine this?

14 *Straschek (continuation).*

Straschek: For you it is perhaps enough to deprive the Jews
of their rights. Then Einstein, Mahler, I and many others will
have been eliminated. But one thing is certain: those much
tougher elements thanks to whose capacity for resistance the
Jewry has for twenty centuries maintained itself without
protection against the whole of mankind – those you will
not be able to exterminate. For they are obviously so organised
that they can accomplish the task that their God has assigned
to them: to maintain themselves in exile, unalloyed and
unbroken, . . .

Forty-seven frames black film

Straschek (off): . . . until the hour of redemption comes!

15 *Danièle Huillet, at home with her cat Misti.*

Huillet: But, asks Brecht, how will someone now say the
truth about fascism, which he is against, if he will say nothing
about capitalism, which brings it to the fore? How then
should his truth turn out to be practicable?

16 *The recording engineer in the Radio studio – the camera
pans onto Peter Nestler, behind the pane of glass, who is
reading.*

Nestler: Those who are against fascism without being against
capitalism, who lament over the barbarism that comes from
barbarism, are the same as people who eat their part of the
calf, but the calf should not be slaughtered. They want to
eat the calf, but not to see the blood.

82 - 17 *Nestler, in front of the camera, continuing to read.*

Nestler: They are not against the ownership relations which generate barbarism, only against barbarism. They raise their voice against barbarism, and they do this in countries in which the same ownership relations rule, but where the butchers still wash their hands before they serve up the meat. Loud accusations against barbaric measures may work for a short time, so long as the listeners believe that in their countries such measures would not come into question. Certain countries are still in a position to keep up their property relations with less actively violent means than others. To them democracy still renders the services for which others must resort to violence – namely, the guarantee of property in the means of production. Monopoly over factories, mines, lands, creates everywhere barbaric conditions; yet these are less visible. Barbarism becomes visible as soon as monopoly can still be protected only through open violence. . . .

18 *Bodies of those shot in the Commune (1871) in coffins (photo: Musée Carnavalet, Paris).*

Twenty-five frames black film

19-30 *We see how bombs are prepared and loaded onto a B-52, which flies off and drops its bombs on Vietnam.*

Eight frames black film

31-32 *And we see a fighter plane, and how the earth burns after a napalm explosion.*

Twenty frames black film

33 *Headline in l'Unità:*

'Builders of the Crematorial ovens at Auschwitz acquitted'.

34 *Headline in Die Presse (Vienna):*

'Concentration-camp architects acquitted – insufficient evidence in Auschwitz trial'.

The camera pans, and then moves downwards, and we read:

'VIENNA. The great Auschwitz trial in Vienna against the two concentration-camp architects Walter Dejaco and Fritz Ertl lasted seven weeks, and the jury were out for six hours before they announced the verdict on Friday in the great courtroom. The principal question – whether the two accused were guilty of participation in mass murder through having drawn up plans for gas chambers and crematoria – was unanimously answered in the negative. The further question, too, of being an accessory

to crime was – in the case of the defendant Ertl, on the basis of his being constrained by orders – answered in the negative. Equally, Dejacó was judged not guilty with reference to the accusation of individual murders. On the strength of this verdict, the presiding High-Court Judge Reisenleitner pronounced the acquittal of the accused. Both were released from custody.'

'*Accompaniment to a Cinematograph Scene*' ends.

End-titles (white on red):

Introduction

to

Arnold Schoenberg's

Accompaniment

to a Cinematograph Scene

Dissolve

by

Jean-Marie Straub

with

Günther Peter Straschek

Danièle Huillet

Peter Nestler

Dissolve

photography

Renato Berta

Horst Bever

lighting

Karl-Heinz Granek

Dissolve

sound

Jeti Grigioni

Harald Lill

mixing

Adriano Taloni

Dissolve

Production Straub-Huillet

to a commission from South West German Radio

The two scenarios have been translated by Misha Donat in collaboration with Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet and are published with their permission.

Edited by Colin MacCabe

The Future of the British Film Industry

Harold Wilson intervened in the film industry with a politics of timid reformism and subsidies after the 1948 disaster (see my article in *Screen* v 16 n 1, Spring 1975, p 84). Now his present Working Party, chaired by John Terry, proposes to repair the damage with the same mixture. Its Report, *The Future of the British Film Industry* (HMSO Cmnd 6372, 50p), opens with an analysis of the problems of the industry (Paragraphs 2-8; all references unless otherwise stated are to the paragraphs of the Report), under three heads: power relations, finance and aesthetics. These are shown to be tightly inter-related. This analysis should have led the Committee to a left-wing reformism, a British-Leyland type of solution, ie the creation of a state sector as the key to the development of a planned mixed-ownership industry, but such solutions are becoming more unpopular in Labour-Party circles (or at least, with the leadership), and the composition of the Working Party itself, including Lady Falkender, Lord Ryder, Bernard Delfont, etc, would not favour them either. In fact the Report advocates a right-wing reformism of the Chrysler type: large subsidies and the smoothing out of some of the more antagonistic contradictions. In the writing of the Report this leads to a rigid censorship of two of the concerns of the introduction (power and aesthetics) in favour of the third (finance), with the assumption that a solution in this area will magically resolve the problems of the other two. Thus the Report can only be read as a weak reformist document about finance. As the trade paper *Screen International* (formerly *Cinema and TV Today*) puts it: 'This is NOT a report on the "Future of the British Film Industry"'. It is a report on the future of British film production with a sidelong glance at distribution and a few crumbs thrown to exhibition. . . . Many of the Report's recommendations are specific, many, too many, have been vaguely defined' (January 17, 1976).

The introduction opens: 'It is widely recognised that in Great Britain we have immense resources of creative, artistic and technical talent, which, given a rational framework and fair opportunities for the exercise of that talent, should ensure the existence

and maintenance of a successful production industry' (2). Clearly, 85
the productive use of these resources is frustrated by a conservative
power structure which irrationally blocks 'opportunities for the
exercise of talent'. The five distribution companies (United Artists,
Columbia-Warner, CIC, Fox-Rank and EMI) exercise almost total
control over the form and the content of the British cinema. They
either directly own or have habitual agreements with the dominant
cinema chains. They provide some (parsimonious) finance for pro-
duction and, more importantly, give the distribution guarantees
which are vital to raise finance from government or private sources.
Four of these five companies are wholly or partly American. The
Report complains that 'Britain . . . has for too long been an
economic and cultural colony of Hollywood. In economic terms,
many of the greatest successes of British film talent have assisted
the US economy far more than they have helped the British' (5).
It is in distribution that the real power in the industry is con-
centrated. And it is clear from the Report that this power is
exercised in a way that is harmful both to the film industry and
to the British economy.

Aesthetically, the big five have always been conservative. EMI
are the only distributors who maintain their own production pro-
gramme in Britain, with a £5 million revolving fund. Their pro-
gramme currently on its way to the cinemas consists entirely of
repeats of old films and old forms: another Agatha Christie;
another Hammer horror; *Aces High*, another World-War-One flying
epic; and a remake of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* starring Dick
Emery. The Report clearly states that this kind of conservatism,
supported by 'the continuing dominance of the British film industry
by Hollywood, has militated against the development of a charac-
teristically British cinema. . . . Many important and successful
British films have been made . . . , but these have been exceptions
to the general trend rather than landmarks in a developing British
tradition' (5). 'Two recognisable British traditions' are identified:
'The school of realism which characterised our great war-time
films and the school of comedy developed by Ealing' (5). These
developed precisely in situations where the power of the dominant
distributors was attenuated in some way. In the War it was over-
ridden to some extent by the urgent need for entertainment-
propaganda which dealt with the dislocation of personal lives and
contained elements of new popular feeling. At Ealing, independence
from the distributors' immediate influence was won by the
exceptional financial deal with Rank and the development of a
tight group of film-makers expressing a recognisable position (see
my article in *Screen* v 16 n 1, Spring 1975). In these conditions, a
distinctive language form (a literal realism) was developed, and it
is this form that the Report identifies as a 'recognisable British
tradition'. This points to the need to develop another language
form (or rather, more than one). However, this is the only point

86 in the Report where the question of aesthetics is broached in any meaningful way. For the rest, the development of a distinctive aesthetic is treated as though it was the natural result of an increased production output, so long as 'films of outstanding artistic merit' which 'often fail to reach a wide enough audience to secure a proper commercial return' are supported by 'a quality award or similar system [which] would give recognition to the view that film-making can be an artistic pursuit in its own right' (108).

In finance, too, the major distributors use their power in a way that is destructive in the long term. First, the balance of payments reveals that a large proportion of the profits from major films has been lost to the industry: 'Many of the greatest successes of British film talent have assisted the US economy far more than they have helped the British' (5). 'US companies throughout the 1960's increased their investment in British film production to such an extent that towards the end of the decade it was estimated that some ninety per cent of the volume of finance for British films came from US sources' (4), but these companies return a large amount of their profits to America, so they are not available for reinvestment in the industry that created them. This systematic depredation has to be set beside the weaknesses of the three other sources of capital for investment in production: 'The supply of finance for production has become increasingly dependent on the limited resources of a very few British distributors, on spasmodic private investment, on the extremely limited resources of the National Film Finance Corporation, and, for the rest, on the changing policies of the major US distributors' (3). The result of this lack of finance is that 'Britain finds herself less able to guarantee the continuity of a national cinema than some of her EEC partners and less able than some of the non-EEC countries, notably Sweden' (6).

The reason why the three other sources are 'limited' or 'spasmodic' is again the policies of the large distributing companies. Rank and EMI (formerly ABC) own most of the fixed capital in the industry: the major studios (apart from the 'four walls' of Shepperton); the laboratories; the distribution outlets; the dominant cinema chains. This capital is dead: these companies, Rank in particular, provide little reinvestment, little risk capital to service this fixed capital, and thus to create an expanding cinema industry based on reinvestment of profits. The big problem for independent producers, the Report states, is that 'the great majority of British film production companies cannot offer any substantial collateral security' (35). A complete divorce between fixed capital and risk capital has existed ever since Rank and EMI stopped any continuous programme of production. This situation in any other industry would lead to a complete breakdown. It is merely the chance of exceptional profits to be made on two out of ten films that sustains the industry at all. But this expectation alone has not been enough to maintain adequate production: 'It

can be estimated that in the calendar year 1975 the aggregate amount invested in British film production will be approximately £25 million. . . . We consider that the overall volume of production finance should be increased to a minimum of £40 million per annum. . . . Such a sum could support a small but significant number of higher-cost features . . . as well as a steady output of lower-cost films' (15-16). It is the complete separation of fixed capital and risk capital that has reduced film production to half what the Working Party considers to be a minimum. 87

Yet this is only the immediate result of this separation of capital functions. The longer-term consequence is the erosion of the fixed capital itself: studios are closed or stripped down; the skilled workforce shrinks; cinemas are sold off or converted to other purposes. This has been going on for two decades, but the Working Party fails to mention it. Rank obtained the capital for their initial investment in Xerox by scaling down their production interests around 1958; and during the 1960's their cinema sites were used to spearhead a cynical and profitable property operation. The lack of investment in film production is now leading to actions by the companies such as EMI's threat to close Elstree studios last year. These threats can only be staved off by what the ACTT Nationalisation Forum called 'the almost total casualisation of the formerly studio-based labour force' since 1970. In Elstree's case, the permanent staff were reduced from 261 to forty-eight (now increased to about sixty). At Shepperton, some 350-400 were made redundant, and the equipment was sold (companies like Samuelson now hire it back to the film-makers working there). A casualised labour force soon melts away into other jobs (TV, construction, engineering, etc) and its accumulated skills are lost. These issues haunt the Report, but despite the presence of the ACTT General Secretary, Alan Sapper, on the Working Party, there is no mention of casualisation, and despite the presence of industrial experts and people with a long experience of film-making, there is no mention of the erosion of fixed capital. To have highlighted this kind of structural defect would inevitably have led them to advocate a strong left-wing policy. Given the Government's present policies, and despite the fact that the decline in cinema attendance seems to have been halted (attendances rose from 134 million to 138 million between 1973 and 1974, the first rise since 1946), it would probably also have meant that subsidies would not be given to an industry in such difficulties.

The result of this closure is that after the opening paragraphs the rest of the Report relies implicitly on chauvinism. 'British film production' is no longer something that responds to the specific British political and ideological configuration, the needs of the people. It is seen merely as something that the Nation needs (for economic reasons) because the Americans have colonised us in the past and, what is worse, have not carried out a consistent policy

88 of robbery on which we could depend. The argument about capital and power becomes one about nations. And apart from *The Times*, which responded with reflex hostility to the bailing-out of yet another lame duck, the British media have almost uniformly accepted this chauvinist justification for another Chrysler-style rescue operation.

The Report has two main recommendations: that the Government should stimulate a new investment of at least £15 million a year; and that they should set up a centralised British Film Authority.

Under the first head, the Government should provide £5 million a year for four years, which would, it is argued, generate another £10 million a year from private sources. The Government aid would take the form of a normal investment in films, repayable if and when they become profitable: 'If interest is charged on production advances, it is usually paid only if and when the principle advanced has been recouped out of the film's available net revenues and a balance of such revenues becomes available. In other words, interest in this context is in reality part of the profit share attaching to the original investment' (35). Therefore, the Report argues, 'in these circumstances [the fund] . . . should not be saddled with the liability for the payment of interest to the Government on the fund itself. "Interest" or "profits" earned through the deployment of the fund in successful film investment would go to increase the fund itself and would ultimately belong to the Government as the sole "shareholder". In other words, the new fund should be established on a firm equity basis' (36). (Note that if a Conservative government should be elected before the four years are up there could still be a cut-back like the one that effectively ruined the present National Film Finance Corporation in 1970 when their available funds were reduced to a paltry £1 million. This insane and haphazard measure has left another £2.3 million returns from previous loans frozen in limbo, unavailable for re-investment (56-8).)

The proposed sources of this capital are the Eady money and the Excess Profits Levy on ITV companies. £4 million a year would come from the ITV tax (currently yielding about £20 million a year). The other £1 million a year would come from the Eady money, a levy which 'comes from cinema patrons through tickets sold at the British box office. It is not a charge on public funds and can be regarded as reducing the proportions of the box office take which might otherwise go to exhibitors, distributors and producers respectively' (30). Some of this is deployed for specific purposes: the BFI Production Board, the Children's Film Foundation, the National Film School, and beginning this year, a new fund to provide pre-production money for the preparation of film projects (£200,000 a year). These reduce the original £5.5 million to £4.7 million a year. At the moment this sum is given to pro-

ducers by a peculiar system (devised by the Board of Trade during Wilson's ministry in 1950) by which the most profitable films which least need a subsidy take the largest share. The Report suggests that £1 million a year (continuing after the initial four years to top up the fund) should be allocated to the British Film Authority's fund. Then 'there would be no danger – as there is some danger in relation to normal Eady payments – of its being lost to the industry' (33).

In addition, television is to be stimulated to invest in feature-film production. The BBC already intends to provide £250,000 a year as finance for pre-production. This will be in dollops of up to £25,000, which, with the new allocation from Eady money, 'can do much to re-vitalise British film production by providing that extremely speculative form of financing without which many promising ideas can never be developed' (64). The BBC would become a shareholder in those films that eventually got off the ground, and would have first option on the TV rights. About TV rights themselves and their sale at low prices, the Report has little to say: '(apart from our two television members) we are convinced that greater efforts should be made by the producers and distributors of British films to obtain better prices for those films which they decide to offer to the BBC or to the ITV companies' (11). As if they weren't trying already.

ITV companies are already in feature-film production, notably Lew Grade's ATV. Of course, 'his productions are deliberately international. They will help the British industry by using the post-production facilities here, rather than the studios' (*Sunday Times*, July 13, 1975). Evidently, this branch of the EMI organisation doesn't consider its studios worth subsidising. All that the Report suggests for ITV companies is that there should be more encouragement for them to invest in films: such expenditure should therefore be made deductible for the purposes of the Excess Profits Levy. The Report also recommends that the current voluntary five-year ban on showing English-language films on TV should become a statutory three-year ban.

The Report's other main recommendation is that the at present scattered Government responsibilities for film should be centralised. A British Film Authority, answerable to one Minister for *all* the arts, should take up the functions at present distributed between the Department of Trade and Industry (film as industry), the Department of Education and Science (film as art), the NFFC (production finance) and the Cinematograph Films Council (the quota, and 'regulation' of restrictive practices). This body would administer the production fund; allocate the £500,000 for loans to help modernise independent cinemas; cooperate with TV in their plans for film production; consider 'ways in which the distribution of films in the United Kingdom might be improved' (122); investigate the proposal to give support to 'films of artistic merit'; and

90 set up an export agency for film. Two further proposed functions are of particular importance for the study and teaching of film. The first is that *complete* statistical information about the industry should be collected. At the moment this is 'almost totally lacking' (82). 'It would also be a matter for the Authority to recommend which classes of statistics should be made available to the public' (83). It is about time that the petty secrecy of the industry was totally abolished, given that the usual arguments about 'revealing things to competitors' no longer hold in this industry (or in most others). The second concerns the National Film Archive; companies registering (British or foreign) films would have to offer a first-class print to the Archive for preservation, and 'if the film is selected by the . . . Archive for preservation, it will be retained by the Archive; otherwise it will be returned' (106). Obviously this has been long overdue. However, the proposal implies but ignores two problems. First, on what criteria is selection (from over 600 films a year) to be based? The British Film Institute's record in this area is not particularly good. Second, the amount that can be selected at all is entirely governed by the Archive's perennial problem, lack of storage space. If the Report is implemented, BFI policies in the area will have to be changed.

The central problem with the proposed British Film Authority is again power: its composition is left completely vague: 'controlled by a Governing Body which would be appointed by the Minister to whom we have referred'; it would be 'composed of one or more executive directors, representatives of the film community, a representative from each of the BBC and the Independent Television Companies Association, and independent members' (119). If the film industry establishment predominates, nothing (not even the restrictive practice of barring) will change. Money will go to projects that contain more of the past than the future, more entertainment and market value than ideological relevance. However, a strong Authority (the least that should be pressed for) could promote new legislation about distribution and exhibition and pursue an imaginative film policy. But the Report's thinking does not augur well for a new era of film production. For example: 'Although large size and high cost are by no means a recipe for success, it is often in this area that the most outstanding commercial results are achieved' (28). Government film policies in the past have been dominated by this kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. What is needed is a policy that will initiate productions with radically differing budgets and aspirations. This policy should include feature-length films made for commercial cinemas on very low budgets (from £50,000) – the kind of production values developed by people like Godard or Dwoskin, the budgets employed by political film groups, etc. This policy is crucial if there is to be a development from the lead haltingly taken in exhibition towards diversity. The creation of multiple cinema complexes is still pro-

ceeding (211 cinemas had been converted by the end of 1974), and they usually include a small (150-seat) auditorium which could become the basis for a low-cost experimental circuit. And finally, there must be an alternative aesthetic strategy to that implied in the Report's unthinking repetition of standard production values. If distinctive cinematic idioms are to be fostered in British film production, it will only be as a result of a deliberate policy of diversity, a decisive move away from monolithic commercial production values. It is completely unrealistic to expect this shift to come about as a result of the pioneering work of the BFI Production Board or from the field of short films. These areas of film-making are deliberately dubbed 'specialised' and their products are habitually excluded from cinemas.

Thus the Report's general approach robs even those of its recommendations that might be supported of any radical effects. Its right-wing reformism advocates financial aid to preserve the existing power structure. It should perhaps be pointed out that there is a left-wing reformist alternative, and that it might command wide support. David Puttnam, co-producer of *Goodtimes/VPS* films (*Lisztomania*, *Stardust*, *Brother Can You Spare a Dime?*, etc) was quoted in the *Guardian* thus:

'What he had really hoped for was that the Government would be asked to put up enough money to take over the Rank Organisation's part in films. He regarded this as a practical possibility because the company, unlike EMI, was not an active film-making company, but it was now the only "utterly vertical" British film company: it had studios, laboratories and exhibition outlets. If Rank, the "dinosaur", was converted into something like the BBC, then the British film industry could have the benefits of a truly mixed economy. It needed a mixed-economy mentality if there was not to be "a Klondyke gold rush" for the extra £20 million until all the money was gone and the industry was back where it had been' (January 15, 1976).

This suggestion has the advantage of expropriating those capitalists who contribute nothing to the prosperity of British film production. The resultant Film Authority could include the use of its studios and post-production facilities as part of its investment in film projects. As important, the ownership of a major cinema chain would finally remove the most formidable obstacle in the way of the more adventurous independent producers: the reluctance of Rank or EMI to show their films at all. Within such a structure, a certain degree of audience participation could be introduced (discussions after showings, viewings of rough cuts, etc). It would even be possible to include a certain amount of worker participation in the running of the studio and the formulation of the overall policy of the Authority; this would be the most radical moment of the left-wing reformism involved. But the real area for negotiation

92 would be the degree of state control over the product and the surplus: whether the Authority should restrict itself to investing in certain projects and guaranteeing distribution for others; or whether it should rather form a corpus of independent film-makers from whom projects were generated, along the lines followed by the BBC or Rank's Independent Producers subsidiary between 1945 and 1948.

This proposal would seem to suit all parties. Even though Rank are exceptionally heavy contributors to Conservative Party funds, they would probably still welcome this piece of nationalisation, as it would inject a large amount of liquid capital into their ailing organisation (according to one financial journalist, largely as the result of an overstretched property operation, Rank Organisation 'looks like an overborrowed and random lash-up of companies that has come preciously close to being run into the ground' - *Sunday Times*, January 15, 1976). As for the ACTT, the proposal would provide an embryonic publically-owned (though in no real sense worker-controlled) structure, and would ensure full-time employment for a significant number of technicians. For the Government, it would ensure that their new cinema investment does not, like their previous ones, help shore up a conservative aesthetic practice or lead to a disaster like British Lion. For film producers, the opportunity would be created to make more aesthetic gambles and experiments, and perhaps to change existing production values to some degree. And the public might get a cinema that is a bit more their own.

Although the need for this kind of solution is seen by the more progressive independent producers, it does not seem to have occurred to the Working Party. Under a cover of nationalist ideology, they substitute the politics of subsidy for the politics of state control and rationalisation clearly demanded by their initial analysis. Hence although their suggestions may help the industry out of its present crisis, even to the extent of rationalising the state's own role in the industry, they do nothing to change the basic rules of the game. The injection of £16 million of public money will undoubtedly result in interesting films, but it will not do what is promised, ie provide a healthy film industry and British film-making idioms. Only experimentation and a challenge to established production values could do that. Similarly, the British Film Authority may be able to intervene in certain areas to restrict the monopolies slightly, but that intervention would still be on their terms (especially if they control its Governing Body). But there are, as I have shown, certain areas in which concessions can be gained for political and experimental film-makers, students of film, and even audiences, supposing Puttnam's constructive suggestion is entirely ignored. The very least that will be gained is that historians of the cinema will have adequate records, both statistics and celluloid, with which to study the decline of the

Jacques Tourneur

In a film culture whose tolerance of theoretical work is dependent upon its confinement to the sanctuaries of academia, it would seem that the exposure of such work to a large audience necessarily involves creating a polemical intervention in that culture. The effect of this year's publication at the Edinburgh Film Festival, *Jacques Tourneur*, edited by Paul Willemen and Claire Johnston, has been to polarise conflict over the critical and theoretical problems of reading and text construction in relation to film. Although responses to the book have not been confined to snide abuse and theatrical bewilderment, they have shared certain crucial areas of concern: the relation between the mode of analysis and the object of study (or the individual films), and the respective roles of the individual spectator and director/'auteur'.

In the book's two original essays by its editors, and in their introduction, the status of Tourneur as an auteur is made clear. They underline the resistance of Tourneur's work to orthodox auteurist readings, which, unable to locate any coherent and individual expression of a world view, have made do with an assertion of the author's 'essential ambiguity'. The essay by Michael Henry gives such a reading which, for all its perceptiveness, goes little further than repeating the films' apparent ambiguities and theorising them in terms of a vague eternal dualism, for example between the individual and 'a shadowy hidden world whether it be that of ghosts or that of the unconscious' (as if there were no difference); the frequency of such words as 'duplicity', 'obscure', 'elusive', 'impenetrable', and 'difficult to fathom' testifies to Henry's own attempts to cover up and his attachment to the idea of the fullness of individual expression. In tracing the ambiguities which are present in certain of Tourneur's films and concentrating on those isolable units of semantic content, his reading neglects the process of signification in which the terms of 'sense' become possible, the 'sense' in which both author and reader participate as subjects in ideology. In attempting to redress this neglect, the editors (deliberately?) make the book's title misleading, as was the organisation of the retrospective along traditional auteurist lines, since all the individual Jacques Tourneur represents here is a stage of assembly for the raw material of the films, the signifiers and sets of relations proposed to the reader. Much of the criticism levelled at the book's editors arises from a fundamental misunderstanding of this object of study: not at all the 'meaning' of Tourneur's films or the selection of a new member for a pantheon of directors but the texts of his films as the space of the pro-

Paul Willemen's own essay goes further; in addition to recognising the modes of textual formation in which both spectator and author are implicated as subjects by and in the phantasy of the film, the reader is 'invited to disengage himself/herself from that position and to take up an active, productive stance in relation to the film' (p 18) by the production of a new critical text which would produce new sets of relations between signifying elements when read through the original textual space. Here Willemen gives detailed readings of several 'Torneur' films (where 'Torneur' is the name which designates that series of spaces offered by the films), focussing on the *work* of the film texts, tracing the process of repetition and homogenisation by which the narrative binds together the heterogeneous elements which threaten to disrupt the re-establishment of harmony; *Out of the Past* (with its constantly reiterated theme of the difficulty of affording its central protagonist a place in the narrative) produces such a complex series of gaps that a more detailed analysis, precluded by the scope of Willemen's essay, would have been welcome. He points out several recurring features within the films that lead to such gaps:

- (a) the insertion of a barrier between the space of the viewer and that of the diegesis which can be seen as constituting a dramatisation of the structure of phantasy itself;
- (b) the auto-designation of the image as a deceptive text to be deciphered;
- (c) the attempt to deal with the fact of sexual difference producing a depiction of different neuroses around central characters.

In this sense Willemen plays out for us the words of Robert Mitchum/Jeff Markham in *Out of the Past*: 'I know I'm in a frame. Now I'm going to look at the picture.' For Mitchum, as for the reader/viewer, the picture contains a role for him which is pre-figured by the 'frame' — only by reading the traces of his presence there can the figuration of the subject by and in the 'frame' be discovered.

However, in emphasising the relation between the insertion of a barrier between screen and scene of the phantasy and the formalist technique of 'laying bare the device', Willemen recognises then glosses over the ambiguity of those signifiers: (pp 25-26).

'If the production of phantasy and the position of the subject are merely "presented", the reader will not recognise them as such in the film, because his attention is not specifically focussed on the need to decipher the phantasy text. . . . Torneur, although his films do imply a locking of the viewer into a fetishistic structure, not only dramatises this process, but constantly draws

If the lessons gained from Willemsen's reading are to be applied to the problems of contemporary film practice (and it is imperative that they should be), then it would seem that at least two further questions need to be raised: firstly, is the signifier which marks such a barrier always ambiguous in that it exerts a pressure stronger than the discourses organising it? And secondly, can the attention on the need for a secondary reading similarly fade into an area of ambivalence, an appearance of aberration, or even redundancy? Put another way: the examples Willemsen cites as barriers from Tourneur's films are simultaneously those which draw the spectator into a fetishistic structure (shadows, foliage etc, that mark the eternal moment before revelation). If this unstable quality of the signifiers is more or less permanent, then the process of the selection and arrangement of images for a political film also poses this problem of how to promote a secondary reading. This gap between drawing attention to the fact of cinematic construction and the actual production of a secondary reading (to which Brecht gave so much attention) is particularly evident in a film like *The Nightcleaners*, where black spaces interrupt the image flow: the invitation is given out, but not necessarily accepted by the reader, as the hostility to these parts of the film has shown. Thus there seems to be doubt about the nature of the reader who is intended to construct the reading: if he or she must, as Willemsen asks, 'have knowledge of the principles by which symbolic codes function' and already be familiar with the task set, then the problem is not raised since the reading will be accomplished semi-automatically, as it were; if, however, the reader is unfamiliar and relatively unknowledgeable, then the ambiguity is still present and the secondary reading can be rejected. Whether in a commercial film or a consciously political one, then, there is a problem of arranging the film's signifiers so as actually to instigate the respective desired responses, in the former to let the spectator into, and in the latter to disengage him or her from that fetishistic structure. It is obviously in this area of the instability of the signifier that a political analysis must pose questions.

Claire Johnston tackles the problems of the fetishistic structure imposed by the classic Hollywood text from a feminist perspective, focussing on female masquerade in Tourneur's pirate film *Anne of the Indies*. The phantasy of female masquerade in which the star's fetishised image in male clothing serves as a phallic substitute, a projection of male phantasy in which the woman's body is used only to disguise her lack, has provided a basis for several Hollywood films (we need only think of Hepburn and Dietrich's roles, particularly in Cukor's *Sylvia Scarlett* and in Von Sternberg's pictures). Johnston sees the importance of *Anne of the Indies* in

96 its constant exposure of the devices used to mask the boundaries of sexual difference to produce the opposition male/non-male: the assumption of masculinity by the hero(ine), Jean Peters/Captain Providence, constitutes an utter refusal of femininity, and not merely its acting-out, in that she attempts to function as the Phallus, the signifier of the Symbolic order; also the oscillation of the signifier between different representatives of the Symbolic order is shown to be unable to annul completely the threat of castration which always exists in the background. The foregrounding through the masquerade of the fundamental problem of bi-sexuality is thus so strong that the repression of the feminine opens our eyes to the mechanism of the fetish:

' Though finally eliminated, this very foregrounding of its impossible presence opens up, in phantasy, the possibility of sexual difference itself, of a bisexuality beyond the determinations imposed by culture and the classic text ' (p 41).

In this respect *Anne of the Indies* may be contrasted with other works by Tourneur in the horror and thriller genres which present the dominant image of woman as ' inexplicable enigma ', a location for the veiled threat of castration. The point is not to make Tourneur out to be some sort of latent feminist, but to examine the forms and mechanisms of the classic text as a means by which femininity is repressed within a patriarchal culture: it is in the limited plurality of the classic text in which woman appears as its ' trouble ' that these forms are broached.

I have thought it necessary to provide a summary of some of the essays' crucial points, since there is some danger that they will be overlooked within the growing debate over the use of psychoanalysis in film theory in a rejection of such a stance *per se*. The main benefit of Willemsen and Johnston's analyses, as I see them, is that they situate film theory and study as inseparable from a study of Freud and Marx, thus threatening the relatively autonomous position of film culture in this country and the predominantly petty-bourgeois interests attached to it. Far from ' losing sight ' of the film's (the most frequent charge) such work offers to engage in a political education of our vision, of our understanding of the complex relations in which ' *we see films* ', questioning the supposed innocent neutrality of each one of those terms.

To perform such work without some reference to psychoanalysis would be more than naive; this much is agreed. The bone of contention has been more the authors' lack of critical distance and ' unproblematic acceptance of psychoanalysis ', as outlined, though without direct reference to the Tourneur book, in the ' Statement on Psychoanalysis and Film ' in *Screen* v 16 n 4. A distinction has first of all to be made between the genuine criticism and difficulties that such a view contains and, as Colin McArthur rightly pointed

out, the unscrupulous use made of them by the 'anti-intellectual lobby'. Jan Dawson's articles in the *Listener* (September 4 and 11, 1975) on the Tourneur book are an example of the latter, using similar arguments in a smug justification of anti-intellectualist populism. It is manifestly untrue that the essays on Tourneur adopt an uncritical and unproblematic relation to psychoanalysis; Claire Johnston's conclusion is particularly critical of both the Julia Lesage and the Brewster/Heath/MacCabe positions and also that of Lacan. The general tendency, in any case, is not one towards a 'resolution of disagreements' but to a Brechtian *division* of the audience, unthinkable without first introducing elements which render 'strange' objects that seemed naturally obvious (in this case Tourneur's films). The feeling of 'unfamiliarity' when confronted with these 'new objects' is thus a fundamental preliminary part of the process towards understanding them better. The argument that such texts are hard to approach because of their 'loose metaphorical use of language' (again used in another context) deserves further examination. It is important to recognise the ideological position that such a criticism of the language's 'difficulty' might express. In criticising a 'play of language' because it 'undermines the attempt to be precise', there is the inevitable risk of positing, if only implicitly, a language which somehow does without such play, which possesses immediate access to the truth, in short one which denies any ideology. There is a connection here with the accusations of arbitrarily using 'insignificant details' to support a psychoanalytical reading: the rejection as 'insignificant' always implies a decision on some code of values, which is here left unstated, unspoken. Attention to these 'insignificant details' does not, however, exclude other readings, as Freud made clear:

'It is in general not such a common thing for psychoanalysis to deny something asserted by other people; as a rule it merely adds something new – though no doubt it occasionally happens that this thing that has hitherto been overlooked and is now brought up as a fresh addition is in fact the essence of the matter.'

(The approval of Timpanaro's criticisms of Freud in the 'Statement' can be answered by the replies of Jacqueline Rose, Juliet Mitchell and others in *New Left Review* n 94, which underline his argument's allegiance to the empiricist, anti-Marxist position taken up by Popper.) The suspicions that psychoanalytical readings may in fact subscribe to a 'puritanical view' of cinema (bear in mind Jan Dawson reminding us that Tourneur's films can still be 'fun' (?)) and that they attribute to the spectator's relation to the film an 'illusory basis' are likewise founded on false dichotomies: the 'illusion' is always a lived relation, and in this sense always real. It is not a question of resurrecting the belief in cinema as 'dreamlike' (Pasolini) or proposing a direct analogy between cinema and the mirror-phase: nowhere are Willemsen or Johnston

The mystification found in their work is of another sort: for instance for Willemsen to say: 'Unfortunately, these concepts (ie the means of intellectual production) are at present the exclusive property of a small number of the educationally privileged; but there is *no reason whatsoever* why this should remain the case' is to overestimate the power of the word over reality. The book, as a festival publication, inevitably became part of the festival as a whole and thus unable to avoid those relations it was attacking. To acknowledge these contradictions would not have solved them, but to ignore them (wiping them out with words) only encourages the persistence of their opacity. The warning must be repeated that although such avant-garde work as practised by Willemsen and Johnston in this book and also other articles in *Screen* is indispensable, there is a tendency for it to 'march so far ahead that the main body of the army cannot follow it and loses it from sight'. In following Brecht it is as well to heed his warnings.

DONALD MACPHERSON

Days of Hope – a Response to Colin McArthur

Colin McArthur's article on *Days of Hope* in *Screen* v 16 n 4, Winter 1975/6, raises a number of complicated questions. While I cannot hope to deal with them all satisfactorily, I wish to offer a provisional response to two of his points. Firstly McArthur claims that the analysis of realism offered by me in v 15 n 2, while attractive in certain respects, lacks the specificity to deal with a complex cultural phenomenon like *Days of Hope*. Secondly he suggests that this failure of specificity might be seen as symptomatic of a more general failure of *Screen*. While broadly sympathetic with *Screen*'s project of the elaboration of theoretical knowledge of film, McArthur considers that there is a lack of involvement on *Screen*'s part with the actual struggles in British film culture and that this lack crucially affects the particular theoretical positions produced and also the failure to win people to a realisation of the general necessity of theory.

The arguments that I put forward on realism in v 15 n 2 can be summarised as follows. While traditional debates about realism have centred on content and the ability to reflect reality, classic realism should be considered as centrally defined by a certain formal organisation of discourses whereby the narrative discourse is placed in a situation of dominance with regard to the other discourses of the text. The narrative discourse does not just dispose the other discourses, it compares them with the truth or falsity transparently available through its own operations. The political question of such a realism is then whether this dominant discourse is in conflict with the predominant ideological discourses of the

time. I argued further, however, that this formal organisation of discourses is fundamentally compromised by the relationship between reader and text on which it depends. The simple access to truth which is guaranteed by the meta-discourse depends on a repression of its own operations and this repression confers an imaginary unity of position on the reader from which the other discourses in the film can be read. 99

McArthur claims that if classic realism offers a discourse of knowledge in which the spectator is placed securely, it is difficult to locate such a discourse in *Days of Hope*. He argues that none of the characters in *Days of Hope* enjoys the privileged position with regard to the narrative that, in the example I used, John Klute does in the film *Klute*. McArthur's problem stems I think from an error in the original article. In my eagerness to demonstrate the position of knowledge conferred by the narrative I neglected to emphasise the constitutive contradiction which makes the production of that position possible. This neglect was confirmed by my use of examples from *Klute*. For while the narrative always guarantees knowledge, it can never deliver all this knowledge in one fell swoop – there must always be the time of the telling which obscures the transparency of knowledge. It is this contradiction on which classic realism works: knowledge is guaranteed at the end of the story but the story is only possible on the condition of the lack of knowledge. In *Screen* v 16 n 1, Spring 1975, pp 49-50, Stephen Heath has characterised this situation as follows:

'The paradox of such a narrative is then this: aimed at containment, it restates heterogeneity as the constant term of its action – if there is symmetry, there is disymmetry, if there is resolution, there is violence; it contains as one contains an enemy, holding in place but defensively, and the strategic point is the implacable disjunction of narrative and discourse, *énoncé* and *énonciation*, the impossibility of holding on the subject position of the one the subject process of the other.'

In *Klute* this basic contradiction is overlaid by another distinction, that between silence as knowledge and speech as ignorance. John Klute was heavily defined as silent and knowledgeable from the start of the film and my reading across these two separate features (the opposition of silence and speech and the progress towards knowledge) entailed that I ignore the process of narration in *Klute*. The point about the position of knowledge within classic realism is that it is produced through a disavowal – we know what is happening but we don't know what will happen, but we know that we will know what will happen. I can thus recast my argument to take account of McArthur's objection and claim that the production of a position of knowledge for the reader within a classical realist text is not dependent on a character who has con-

100 stant access to the knowledge generated by the narrative. In fact in *Days of Hope* Ben's progress from an unthinking soldier to a committed revolutionary who has seen through the lies of the bosses, the unions and the Labour Party is a progress from ignorance to knowledge which is also the progress of the viewer. The important feature of this progress is that its end is guaranteed from its beginning and it is this certainty which enables the reader to place him or herself in a position of unity from which the material is dominated. And it is in the light of this clarification about the place of the discourse of knowledge that we can indicate the solution to McArthur's queries about contradiction. In my original article I claimed that the classic realist text could not deal with contradiction. McArthur holds that *Days of Hope*, despite fulfilling all my criteria for classic realism, can deal with contradiction. In evidence he cites the sequence in which the mine-owner speaks about the peaceful and constitutional British tradition while in the background the troops brought in to quell the miners indulge in bayonet practice. What McArthur here confuses is the narrative's ability to state a contradiction which it has already resolved, and the narrative's ability to produce a contradiction which remains unresolved and is thus left for the reader to resolve and act out. In other words while McArthur looks simply for contradiction in the text, we must look at how contradiction is produced in the audience. In the example McArthur cites there is a contradiction between what the mine-owner says and what the picture shows. But this is exactly the classic realist form which privileges the image against the word to reveal that what the mine-owner says is false. In this manner our position of knowledge is guaranteed – we may choose to disagree with what the narrative tells us but if it has already placed us in the position where we are sure we are right – it has not questioned the very construction of that position.

In order to fracture this unity it would be necessary to pose the problem of the conditions of representation; it would be necessary to interrogate the reality of the constitutional tradition which allows films like *Days of Hope* to be shown on television. To pose these problems would also and immediately pose the problems of the lessons of what happened then for the situation today – the transparent immediacy of the film would be broken by analysis. Only thus could the position of the viewer be fractured and with no obvious assigned position, he or she would have to work on the material. It could be objected, at once, that such a film would have a much smaller audience than *Days of Hope* managed to attract. But this raises the question (which does not seem to have been posed by the makers) of who the play is addressed to. In so far as this question is not posed then the film falls within a bourgeois conception of history in which the past is understood as having a fixed and immutable existence rather than being the site of a constant struggle in the present. And it is this conception of

history which places *Days of Hope* firmly within the most typical 101 of the BBC's varieties of artistic production: the costume drama. Another feature of this lack of analysis is the content of the knowledge that Ben and the viewer have gained by the end of the film. Given the fact that this knowledge is final, which is a necessity imposed by the form, and given that the General Strike was a failure, a necessity imposed by history, the only knowledge that the text can produce (which will both have the necessary finality and leave history as it is) is that of betrayal. Given that we can see that the working class were honest, straightforward and committed to socialism, their defeat must be the work of leaders who betray them. And this, of course, raises the question of the film-makers' political sympathies and affiliations.

But we have now advanced into the area of McArthur's other argument. In order to consider seriously the questions raised by *Days of Hope*, one would need the kind of thorough consideration of both television and the cultural and political situation which McArthur urges. But McArthur's strictures suffer from the same abstraction from actuality that he condemns in *Screen's* work. For he presumes that *Screen* can simply undertake any number of tasks and perform them equally well. In reality the situation is very different. Given *Screen's* commitment to theoretical understanding of film, the magazine has been engaged over the last five years in the elaboration of the various advances in semiotics, structuralism, psycho-analysis and Marxism. This work has had to be undertaken within a cultural situation which entailed that much of this work was very unfamiliar and that there was a severe shortage of people with the competences to produce the kind of articles that *Screen* was trying to promote. Given this situation, it was, until very recently, impossible to contemplate taking on the kind of tasks that McArthur outlines. More recently the situation has changed and, thanks in part to other work, but in no small measure to *Screen* itself, there is an abundance of potential *Screen* writers. We are now in a position to start both that process of self-criticism and the undertaking of new projects. McArthur's articles indicates tasks to be undertaken and this reply merely attempts to show how past *Screen* work can provide a starting point from which to approach those tasks. If certain formalist tendencies can be discerned within an article such as my one on Brecht, it seems to me that a greater consideration of the place of the audience is necessary in order to correct that tendency. The work continues. . . .

COLIN MACCABE

When Screen began to discuss recent developments in semiotics and their application to the cinema, nearly all the published work

102 in the area was in foreign languages. The situation has now changed; English and American students, particularly in the disciplines of English literature, foreign languages and philosophy, have begun to publish work introducing, disputing and utilising concepts drawn from the same developments. The following two articles in this number's Film Culture section discuss two recent books as examples of the way semiotics is being absorbed into academic practice in this country. Many more examples of the genre have appeared or can be anticipated. In future, we will only discuss them in *Screen* if they are of interest over and above their representative character.

Appropriation/Recuperation

Until recently in Britain literary analysis has provided the principal framework for serious work on film. Two tendencies can easily be identified in such writing: the use of a native tradition deriving from Leavis and I A Richards, represented today in the practice of orthodox English literary criticism; and opposed to this, the tradition of French structuralists like Barthes, Todorov, and Greimas. For readers of *Screen*, it is the latter which will readily be identified as the 'progressive' tendency; texts and concepts developed by these writers for the study of literature have been applied in *Screen* and elsewhere to film. Clearly, it is of interest to *Screen* readers to know how these developments are being received within literary studies, and Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975) can be seen as symptomatic in this respect. In many areas, structuralism does indeed appear to have at least shaken the confidence of more conventional theoreticians. While many respond by flat rejection, others have shown some interest and have helped stimulate a modish (albeit delayed) wave of publications concerned to establish a rapprochement between the two aforementioned tendencies. We need go no further than the preface of *Structuralist Poetics* to locate the dominant concern of such work:

'My claim in this book is that in trying to revitalise criticism and free it from an exclusively interpretive role, in developing a programme which would justify it as a mode of knowledge and enable us to defend it with fewer reservations, we might do well to look to the work of French structuralists. Not that their criticism is itself a model which could or should be directly imported and reverently imitated, but that through a reading of their works one may derive a sense of criticism as a coherent discipline and of the goals at which it might aim' (p viii).

'One may derive a sense of criticism' - 'An encounter with their works, that is to say, may enable us to see what criticism might do' (ibid); this intuitionist phraseology stamps the work for what it is: the appropriation of structuralism to refound the orthodoxies

of literary criticism, and more than this, a systematic attempt to build a structural theory of reading which can reconstruct intuitionism at a hitherto undreamed-of level of technical sophistication. I hope to show that this is in itself an unrealisable project; but first I must say a few words about the conditions of possibility of such a text appearing. This involves both the characteristics of literary criticism on the one hand, and those of structuralism on the other, for Culler's text is not merely an uneasy combination of incompatible discourses, but a symptom of the conditions of their mutual recognition.

For I A Richards, as Colin MacCabe has argued in an as yet unpublished paper, the real world exists as a body of facts waiting to be communicated. For the act of communication to take place, it is necessary that a writer experience this reality, and then through the medium of language communicate with a reader. Central as a point of reference for this conception is *The Meaning of Meaning*, published originally in 1923 and subsequently appearing in several editions. Here Ogden and Richards devote themselves to reforming the use of language through scientific inquiry so that the act of communication between author and reader can be perfected. Distortions in the language which interfere with this process of communication are identified as inadequacies of symbolisation; language itself is simply the instrument through which the burden of experience is delivered. It has been pointed out that much of Richards' work on languages was a reflection of concerns and ideals of the period following the First World War, particularly the belief that international conflict was the outcome of poor understanding and communication. Disharmony between nations could be eradicated by the construction of a medium of perfect communication (the League of Nations) which would represent interests and facilitate their mutual regulations. For Richards, then, the notion of symbolic representation in discourses is one in which the real world (experience) is democratically represented in the sign, such that the sign contains and conveys a harmony of modulated experience. The 'ideal text' thus becomes a perfect medium of representation where all interests are reconciled and efficiently organised (this can be expressed in ideas of the *economy* of the text as a system of regulation which maximises the content of the sign by a process of *satisficing*). In turn, the text is the expression of the experience of a judging subject, who uses language in order to represent his experience; for the reader, any 'difficulty' in the text is resolved through a process of identifying the meaning, which itself is the experience of the author and independent of the language deployed to express that experience.

This then is the theory of language and communication which at an abstract level is present in the enterprise of English literary criticism. In practice, it is materialised in a cultural ideology concerning a differentiation of 'high' from 'low' culture, such that

104 the 'good object' is identified as Literature, as distinct from 'popular fiction'. This cultural ideology is institutionalised in educational establishments, writings on 'the Arts' in newspapers and magazines, and various works on modern culture which of course denigrate popular cultural forms in television and film by introducing a distinction between serious and non-serious work which rescues the standards of literariness from 'bad objects'. This can be seen at work in the contributions of film-critics who deploy a degenerated form of literary criticism to evaluate current films for a discriminating public. The anomalies which film presents for such criticism revolve around the identification of the text and its language, an anomaly which is in general dealt with by the reduction of the film to a written narrative which can then be treated like any other text. The language of this text is then dealt with as neutral, the means of conveying good or bad messages.

What has been provisionally labelled 'structuralist' criticism perhaps differs most from the approach just outlined in the area of 'language'. For Richards, language is the means of communicating experiences which derive from the facticity of the world; it is a medium under the control of a judging subject. Structuralist work breaks away from this conception, and begins from the proposition that language is a structure, a set of oppositions and differences which constitute the space in which the subject and object appear and are set in play. Whereas the sign for Richards is empty, a bearer of a meaning independent of it, for Saussure the linguistic sign unites a concept and a sound-image which implies no reference to a world of facts to have meaning. The introduction of linguistic analysis into the study of all forms of texts is part of the programme initially proposed by Saussure under the title of semiology, a general science of signs (which, following modern usage, I shall hereafter call semiotics). As will no doubt be familiar, the project of beginning from language as a signifying system, and then moving to non-linguistic phenomena such as road-signs, or clothing, has in general been unsuccessful. In fact, what occurred was that a structural linguistics developed from Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, and the categories that it produced were later transferred to literary analysis on the grounds that the latter is a signifying practice which works with different forms of language. It is not necessary in this review (but see Terry Counihan's article below) to attempt an outline of the notion of 'structuralism' beyond remarking that it is precisely this reduction of texts to signifying systems that is crucial for the encounter of the two tendencies noted at the beginning of the review.

The semiotic enterprise poses as its object of analysis texts, undermining the traditional concern with Literature and Meaning. In a polemical fashion, semiology takes up non-Literary texts – Eco for example has produced analyses of advertisements, while

Barthes has produced a book on codes in fashion magazines. From the viewpoint of orthodox literary criticism such an approach destroys the carefully preserved 'good object' by introducing methods and techniques which set classic works side by side with James Bond and strip cartoons. The fatal weakness of such structural analysis is however this very inability to differentiate texts and discourses: at its worst it becomes a method which can run riot, obliterating pertinent theoretical and political differences in its ceaseless quest for new signifying practices. In fact, the manner in which disciplines such as anthropology and economics are appropriated is regulated by certain contingent features, ie features specific to the internal structure of those particular disciplines. To take the example of economics, the semiotic enterprise identifies money as the pertinent signifying system, because it is money that performs a crucial function of representation in economic exchanges. However, in terms of the order of economic analysis, money has a subordinate place, and does not form a means through which distinct economic discourses can be characterised or differentiated. The concreteness of the representational form appropriated by semiotics is thus illusory, but this remains a problem that it is unable to solve in its own terms. These contingent features then remain the property of the respective discourses and disciplines and are not internal to semiotics itself. Increasingly, structuralist work is taking on the appearance of an ever-more sophisticated battery of techniques desperately seeking an employment which will live up to its complexity.

The theoretical absence which marks the semiotic project renders it recognisable to English literary criticism, which has a similar problem. While the latter possesses some form of given boundary to its work – the boundary given externally by the cultural ideology which operates to differentiate relevant from irrelevant or peripheral literature – it cannot be said that it possesses any theoretical principles which underwrite this boundary or provide rules about what is done inside it. Generally speaking, it is the intuitions of a 'cultured reader' which control the production of literary criticism, marking the absence of techniques of reading or indeed the need for them: ultimately it is not the text which is being read, but the experiences of the subject. Semiotics provide a technique but no object; English literary criticism provides an object but no technique. The conditions for a historical compromise can be detected here. While the two tendencies might seem to be divergent, there is in fact space for a compromise formation, which, starting from Richards' principles, appropriates the techniques of structuralism to re-vamp the discourse of literary analysis in a more modern form. This possibility is realised in Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*.

As noted above, it is not necessary to go any further than the preface to encounter forewarning of the line that is to be adopted

106 in the succeeding text. Structuralism, claims Culler, offers to literary criticism a 'poetics which strives to define the conditions of meaning' (p viii) and he goes on to draw an analogy with grammar:

'Just as the speaker of a language has assimilated a complex grammar which enables him to read a series of sounds or letters as sentences with a meaning, so the reader of literature has acquired, through his encounters with literary works, implicit mastery of various semiotic conventions which enable him to read series of sentences as poems or novels endowed with shape and meaning' (p viii).

As is clear from Part One of the book, these 'semiotic conventions' are systematised through the use of a linguistic model of transformational grammar derived from the work of Chomsky. In turn, Chomsky has defined 'grammar' as: '... a set of rules – preferably a finite set, if we expect finite automata to learn them – that specify the grammatical strings of symbols.' A simple comparison of definitions provided by different texts is of course here of minor interest; rather it is necessary to draw attention to the implications of certain analogies and borrowings in the exposition of Culler's semiology. To introduce an analogy and then set it to work in the way that Culler does with Chomskian grammar has two principal consequences: first, that the analogy with grammar produces the neutral code of languages sought by Ogden and Richards as a set of rules which by sets of transformations can supply all the various symbolic representations of literature; and second, a reading subject is posited with the competences necessary to derive meaning from this abstract and in itself meaningless representational system. These two consequences are related, but represent differing possibilities within the compromise formation that Culler produces.

Aspects of the first problem arise when in Part One Culler examines the contribution of linguistics to structural semiotics. Whereas for structural linguistics the notion of meaning is inseparable from a specific ensemble of signs, Culler wishes to employ the ensemble of signs as a neutral bearer of meaning:

'Structuralism is thus based, in the first instance, on the realisation that if human actions or productions have a meaning there must be an underlying system of distinctions and conventions which makes this meaning possible. Confronted with a marriage ceremony or a game of football, for example, an observer from a culture where these did not exist could present an objective description of the actions which took place, but he would be unable to grasp their meaning and so would not be treating them as social or cultural phenomena. The actions are meaningful only with respect to a set of institutional conventions' (pp 4-5).

This 'man-from-Mars' argument, beloved of English philosophers,

asserts that the objective world is a world of facts waiting to be described. These facts are however devoid of meaning; the interpretative activity of a subject who is alone privileged to endow them with meaning intervenes to mobilise these facts into knowledge. Whereas the philosopher proceeds to solve any difficulties of meaning by the consideration of ordinary language and so on, Culler steps in with a more sophisticated battery of categories and linguistic paraphernalia to improve on this endeavour, providing as is indicated above an apparatus capable of generating this ordinary language itself. 'Ordinary language' is thereby upstaged by 'transformational grammar', but in this process the problem of meaning remains posed in exactly the same way. In the example cited, the 'Man from Mars' is able to give perfectly coherent descriptions of the facts he observes; that these descriptions are incomprehensible to the *Homo martianus* is of no significance. If by some lucky chance he manages to acquire the terminology of transformational grammar, this will enable him to provide *much better* descriptions of the facts he observes, such that his incomprehensible descriptions will be absolutely transparent for anyone that he encounters who possesses the relevant experience required to interpret them. As for Richards, the reader for Culler is a subject who, because of his shared experience and culture with the author of a text, is able to give meaning to the language used in the process of communication. Furthermore, Culler then goes on to draw an analogy with Chomsky in referring to the 'literary competences' required to read texts, indicating that the role of structuralist poetics is to produce improved training programmes for literary minds.

This is the second problem noted above, and it is the clearest point at which the semiotics and the literary criticism come into conflict in the text. This occurs in Chapter 6 which, following a more or less acceptable account of structuralist work in the first five chapters, attempts to bring this sharply together with orthodox criticism. Since the two enterprises are antagonistic in the role ascribed to language, Culler deals with this by subordinating the structuralist aspects to the Lit-Crit ones. The outcome is manifested in statements of the following type:

'To believe that the whole institution of literary education is but a gigantic confidence trick, would strain even a determined credulity, for it is, alas, only too clear that knowledge of a language and a certain experience of the world do not suffice to make someone a perceptive and a competent reader. That achievement requires acquaintance with a range of literature and in many cases some form of guidance' (p 121).

The parenthetical 'alas' here betrays Culler's conventional concerns, and also indicates the space which he attempts to make available for structuralist analysis. For as indicated in the opening

108 paragraphs of this review, the techniques which Culler imports are designed to remedy some of the more obvious shortcomings of outworn orthodoxies. It is noteworthy, too, that when in Chapter 6 Culler discusses this crucial area of 'competence' (the point of convergence between linguistics and literature), the text continually regresses to positions supported by writers such as Empson and Northrop Frye, away from the dominant (structural) concerns of the earlier chapters. His consideration of Empson's argument about 'properly-qualified minds' (p 125) starkly highlights the weight that must be placed on a 'reader' for interpretation to be successfully performed. In this case Culler attempts to retrieve the situation by asserting that what is being given primacy is not the reader's reaction, but rather his assent to the explanation the critic produces of the effects of particular texts. The political democracy of representation inscribed in the symbolic order of the text by the writer is thus doubled by a complementary democracy of assent by the reader to the clarification of the critic. The reader is reduced to passively confirming the explanations provided by the literary competents armed with the interpretative instrumentarium of structuralist linguistics.

Chapter 6 thus provides an example *in extenso* of the antagonisms present within the text of *Structuralist Poetics*, and the way in which the antagonisms are perpetually resolved by a regression to the orthodox position of English literary criticism. In other places this process of resolution takes the more subtle form of recovering a statement formed within the discourse of semiotics by following it with a qualification or emphasis which in fact restates the position within the terms of literary criticism. (Rather than laboriously working through an example, attention can be drawn to this process at work on p 162 lines 3-6.) This process is relatively insidious, and would generally lead to a confusion on the part of a reader concerning the exact position being developed at any one time. The problem raised here concerns the mechanical devices within the text which guide the reader through the argument; the demands of the incompatible discourses which Culler is attempting to assimilate produce this constant redirection of the reader, so that readers who are confused are likely to find themselves at fault for insufficient attention in following the argument. Culler is of course not to blame for this: it is simply the outcome of uniting two discourses which are at crucial points incommensurable. When the demands of the argument become divergent, it is necessary for devices to be deployed which can re-establish the harmony which the narrative assumes.

I cannot here examine the particular manner in which particular positions or texts are dealt with. My aim has been rather to outline the conditions which lead to the form of appropriation of certain structuralist tendencies which Culler offers. This needs to be emphasised, since the fact that *Structuralist Poetics* is the intro-

duction into an orthodox Eng-Lit approach of certain structuralist techniques has in general not been recognised; it appears to have been accepted as a viable introduction to aspects of French structuralism. While it does of course fulfil this function, it must be noted that the manner in which it does so simply recovers the principal tenets of conventional literary criticism. 109

KEITH TRIBE

Epistemology, Models and Structuralism

The ostensible task of Philip Pettit's *The Concept of Structuralism: a Critical Analysis* (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin) is to consider the extension of the concepts and terms of structural linguistics to non-linguistic areas. As such it might seem of considerable interest to *Screen* readers. Although, as I shall attempt to show, this is not the case, there are some lessons to be learnt from it.

Firstly, that (mis)appropriations of linguistics and semiotics of this sort which are principally concerned to dispute the possibility of a *scientific* semiotics invariably rely on sceptical and reductionist positions concerning the role of theory (in the sciences and elsewhere). In Pettit's case this reductionism is produced by way of an epistemology of models, a position within the philosophy of science. However, this is by no means the only platform for such scepticism, which may arise within film theory, other areas of cultural orthodoxy or simply derive from a nebulous agnosticism and anxiety about the use of a particular discourse, eg psychoanalysis (cf *Screen* v 16 n 4, Winter 1975-6, pp 119-130). There is therefore some point in criticising Pettit's text, bearing in mind its status as a special case of a wider tendency. Although some terms from epistemology are used to do this, they are kept to a bare minimum.

Secondly, although the issue of whether or not particular forms of theoretical discourse are sciences is not important for their immediate functioning (no one is going to stop using semiotic or psychoanalytic concepts to analyse films because some philosopher decides they are not scientific) it is still the characteristic area of polemic, where points of resistance to theory are most clearly displayed. The status of a discourse is implicated in the work done by its concepts and any attack on the one is implicitly an attack on the other. Thus attempts such as Pettit's to pre-define or reduce theory to 'models', speculative intuitions or 'critical interpretations' (hermeneutics) have serious consequences (however indirect) for film work and need to be opposed.

Pettit begins his discussion of 'structuralism' by considering the problem in terms of 'models'. Initially it appears that the model he constructs is merely one 'which structuralists are in a position to derive from structural linguistics' (p 1), in other words,

110 'it is not necessarily part of linguistics itself but something which may be constituted from it. The justification for his model appears to be pragmatic and provisional: it provides a means to evaluate structuralism, which is defined as 'the project of extending structural linguistic concepts to other areas' (p 2). The notion of structuralism as an applied linguistics is dubious, but, more important, Pettit gives no argument to demonstrate that this evaluation can or should only be done by model-building, and in fact there is no serious defence of the pertinence of 'models' to either the characterisation of scientific theories or extrapolations from them in his book. The central role of the term 'model' is simply given, ie introduced without justification.

But this acceptance of the epistemological role of models is only the start of the difficulties. At the beginning of the book Pettit specifies his model as a hypothetical or possible one, as stated above; that is, it is in no way extrapolated from previous uses of linguistic concepts in semiotics. However, as the book proceeds, this distinction is either lost or only fitfully maintained. Thus, whereas in the preface, Pettit asserts merely that the model or framework is 'available' to structuralists in linguistics, ie it has only a hypothetical capacity (cf also p 33), by Chapter 2 it is no longer a possible model but *the* linguistic model. In fact he is trading on this ambiguity of status. Nevertheless, it is clear in the end that he means that his model is equivalent to any use by semiotics of linguistic concepts.

Pettit provides a brief defence of the value of his possible model, on two grounds. First, if the model is 'plausible', he believes such plausibility will be of 'intrinsic theoretical interest' (p 2). Second, if it can be grounded in the tradition of structural linguistics, that is, in some way significantly reflect the various theories and concepts of Saussure, Jakobson and Chomsky, it may 'illustrate the different uses of the model in the actual enterprises of structuralists inspired by that tradition' (p 2). In other words, Pettit assumes that theoretical linguistics in its various forms is itself a model against which other models, including his own possible reconstruction, may be measured and evaluated. Thus the unitary character of the notion 'model' provides a form of continuity between quite disparate forms of theoretical discourse – epistemological, linguistic and semiotic. In Pettit's book each discourse is read back on to an area of subject matter, raw material or reality, of which the discourse is simply an abstraction or model.

Anterior metaphysical assumptions in fact obtrude at each point in Pettit's construction of his problem. Theoretical linguistics is read as the study, by a process of selection and abstraction, of a real object: natural languages. The linguistic analyst's access to this real object is a set of conceptual transparencies or instruments in the form of a model which will both restrict the given object and re-order it into an accessible form. This conception of linguistic

discourse as a model which is either adequate or inadequate to real languages, presupposes certain philosophical notions which an epistemologist like Pettit can codify according to general criteria of scientificity, internal coherence and practical use. The specious unity provided by this division of theories into models of the real is, in fact, the unity of a legislative master-discourse – a discourse defined by its function of judging the knowledge-claims of all other discourses.

In accordance with this imperial function, Pettit reworks the Kantian dictum (recently revived by Imre Lakatos) that philosophy without empirical disciplines is empty, while the empirical disciplines without philosophy are blind. Philosophy can only sustain its role as the provider of sight if its own concepts are inflated by the fullness of the empirical. The work of the master-discourse is sanctioned, in Pettit's view, by the needs of its own empirical nourishment and the alleged helplessness of the sciences without its guidance. In his book, the result of this dominant role of philosophy is to rob the work of concepts in a theory like Saussure's of its specificity and to displace the problems of those concepts on to the philosophical question of their adequacy to an external real object. The latter has the determinant role in Pettit's book because its structure is pre-given: theories can only provide models which fit this pre-given structure better or worse. According to Pettit, structural linguistics 'fits' its object because the basic unit of that object, the sentence, is present in a natural language. By the same reasoning, the concepts of structural linguistics cannot be applied to what he pretentiously calls the 'customary arts' (ie cooking, clothes, etc) because no comparable feature of them can have the same function. The persistent opposition between the discursive model and the real object obliterates the theoretical conditions of possibility of the discourse.

The most obvious result of this procedure in Pettit's case is a grotesque distortion of Saussure, who specifically disavows the sentence as the basic unit in linguistics in favour of the word and its role in the signifying chain. Pettit's attempt at a compromise model combining prominent features of both Saussure and Chomsky requires the subordination of the former to the latter in a spurious unity where the Saussurean 'model' is the origin from which Chomsky's may be derived. If this were to be seriously argued it would have to be proved by a detailed demonstration – for example, that Saussure was mistaken in his preoccupation with the word rather than the sentence, or that in fact all possible analyses of linguistic signification presuppose the sentence in an unchanging and uniquely determining role. Of course, Pettit never provides such a demonstration. Instead, a teleological conception of the relation between the two discourses is implicitly supposed. The Saussurean differential 'model' is assumed to be simply a stage in the realisation of its generative successor. This would under-

112 mine the distinction between differential and generative 'models' and reduce the former to a minor moment in the predetermined ascent of the latter. Pettit, however, does not even argue this, nor is there much evidence that he is even aware of the problem of theorising changes in structural linguistics. The question of the conditions of transition between different theories is simply blurred and a typically ecumenical reconciliation proposed. The result of this denial of difference is an impoverished model lumping together different sections of theoretical linguistics united solely by an imported metaphysical position which places individual intuitions in a dominant role.

Having thus reduced linguistics, Pettit can turn to structuralism (or semiology – the two terms are interchangeable in the book). He sees it as an epistemological thesis or set of protocols for the use of categories from structural linguistics; structuralism treats 'all "sign systems" the way linguistics treats language' (p 33). (Despite this reference to 'sign systems' and a meagre discussion of the Saussurean analysis of the sign, Pettit is only marginally concerned with different systems of signification such as the cinema or literature.) For commentators like Pettit, the definition of structuralism is an abiding problem, because the various currents which surfaced in Paris in the mid-1960's escape simple classification. In particular, the revival of psychoanalysis, Marxist epistemology and ethnology do not operate with equivalent concepts, nor are their respective debts to linguistics of the same sort. The situation gets especially complex if figures like Derrida and Foucault are included. Pettit's self-serving strategy is to restrict structuralism to its lowest common denominator, ie, a minimal dependence on linguistics. Even with this strategy he manages to produce only one argument or assertion concerning the utilisation of linguistic concepts. Nothing functions like a language, repeats Pettit, except language itself. There is no unit comparable to a sentence in anything but language. This unremarkable thesis is dragged through a series of texts which are either approved or found wanting according to the support they provide for it. Needless to say, whether it be Barthes's 'analysis of narrative or Lévi-Strauss on myths, Pettit's verdict is always the same: if there is no equivalent to the sentence, then no certificate of scientificity will be issued to that discourse. On p 54 he even tabulates the set of possible analyses of different non-linguistic subject matters, this taxonomy enabling him to tell in advance what can and cannot be studied scientifically. The point of this absurdly formalist notion is another function of Pettit's imperial discourse, which attempts to legislate the conditions of any inquiry. Whenever he embarks on a discussion of narrative analysis, the study of myths, etc, he already knows the answer. Because only linguistics has the privileged unit of the sentence, its concepts will only produce science when restricted to that sphere. The sentence is responsible as necessary

and sufficient condition for the theories which analyse its conditions of possibility. Its specific properties as a given object dictate the order of the concepts capable of explaining it. However, it is now a commonplace, even in empiricist philosophy of science, that scientific theories can succeed one another by casting into doubt the most basic (empirical) terms of preceding or competing theories. What counts as empirical is theoretically dependent and variable; and certainly not an absolute in the manner Pettit implies.

Pettit's judgement of structuralism is that it is either ambitious and empty or modest and uninteresting. Certain semiological currents which conform to Pettit's restrictive definition, or can be read as so doing, fall into the latter category, and are indeed open to charges of formalism, as Keith Tribe's review of Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* in this number of *Screen* demonstrates. Those in the first category have simply been cast into the outer darkness by Pettit's definition, and although it is clearly a major function of the book to satisfy those who want to think them ambitious and empty, they are not discussed by Pettit, and cannot be. Although the Preface promises commentary on Althusser, Foucault and Lacan, this turns out simply to be name-dropping. On pp 68-9, these three authors are defined negatively as opponents of phenomenology and existentialism who 'cannot be counted as structuralists for a strong reason: there is nothing in ideology, the archive or the unconscious to correspond to the sentence in language' (p 69). Here Pettit is a victim of either his ignorance or of his reading, once again: 'ideology' in Althusser is not a 'language in its own right', nor was it ever intended to be; Foucault's 'archive' is not a language, it is a division of discourse; while if Lacan's case is more complicated, there is no question that the unconscious is a language although it is created and determined by the entry into language. Derrida, Kristeva and the *Tel Quel* group in general get even shorter shrift.

Having thus disposed of structuralism to his own and his intended readers' satisfaction, Pettit's alternative is to regress to the subjectivist conception of art as the unique and particular to be studied by the privileged access of the intuitions of a cultivated audience. Admittedly, some 'homogeneous' structuralist concepts may service diverse areas of mass culture as a bonus. His solution to the non-problem of structuralism and its analysis of the non-linguistic is simply a watered-down version of the neo-Kantian two-worlds thesis, according to which the sphere of artistic creativity and expression resists explanation by the impersonal generalisations of a discourse appropriate to Nature. Thus the celebration of intuitions as the guide to virtuous and vicious structures. There is an uncomfortable imbalance in this conclusion: a bare minimum of structuralism had to be allowed (after all, he'd just written a whole book on the 'heady stuff', p 69)

114 while settling for the familiar humanist line that art is unique and beyond systematic theoretical analysis. This is topped off by the obligatory deferential reference to another discourse marked by the ruthless subordination of science to metaphysics – the speculative anthropology of Jurgen Habermas's 'critical philosophy of science'.

Pettit's actual project is not reducible to the one announced at the beginning of the book, or at best only partially so. The book has at least two other functions which overshadow the banal thesis about the scientificity of semiotics. First, because only constituted linguistic science can be scientific (because of the uniqueness of its object), the arts and humanities (especially mass culture) are reserved for the intuitions of a given set of subjects and any 'models' derived from linguistics or whatever are subordinated to these intuitions. Pettit's metaphysics ratifies the existing order of discourses and emasculates semiotic analysis by ignoring or smoothing over all those disturbing or disruptive features which threaten the sovereignty of subjectivity and its precious intuitions. For example, in the discussions of language and meaning, there is no consideration of the unconscious or of the determining capacity of economic or political structures. The second and perhaps more important function of this book is that it contains a minor Oxbridge Don's attempt to produce a *persona*. Pettit's own role in the text is that of the conciliatory mediator, occupying the central ground between the extremes, one minute assuring the domestic audience 'we are not dealing with a bizarre piece of French nonsense' (p 108), the next ticking off the over-ambitious structuralists for taking a 'Nietzschean joy in the caprice of things' (p 39) or despising 'the general psychology of readers' and driving literary analysis 'into the sheerest caprice' (p 45). The name-dropping (mentioning texts and authors and then announcing that they will not be discussed) functions to give a gloss of erudition to this posture of moderation. This is frequently awkward, full of affectations (never fully mastered) and in the long run an unsuccessful imitation, but failures of this sort are interesting because they highlight the means involved in more successful forms of self-promotion and indicate the difficulties inherent in the process. At least this is of historical interest – the main thesis of the book has no positive value whatsoever.

TERRY COUNIHAN

Errata

Screen v 16 n 3, Autumn 1975, p 127: Jean-Louis Baudry's article 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' appeared in *Film Quarterly* v XXVIII n 2, Winter 1974-5 and not as given.

Screen v 16 n 4, Winter 1975-6, p 130; the second signature should read 'Christine Gledhill', not 'Christopher Gledhill'.

Stephen Heath

The tribute to Universal at the NFT last summer brought with it a print of the version of *Touch of Evil* agreed by Welles and subsequently cut by fourteen minutes to produce the release version with which we are familiar (the longer version was also shown on BBC 2 in September). The new material was discussed by Jonathan Rosenbaum in *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1975) with reference to my extended study of the film in 'Film and system: terms of analysis' (*Screen* v 16 nn 1 and 2, Spring and Summer 1975) and I want simply to complement that study by giving details of the various cuts, adding one or two brief comments in conclusion. The notation used in what follows depends on the narrative breakdown of the film given in the first part of 'Film and system'.

1. I h (see also Table 1). Shot 4 of this sequence ends with Quinlan framed in close-up outside Tanya's exiting left into camera. Instead of cutting immediately to Q seen from behind opening the door into Tanya's, the longer version (hereafter LV) continues the shot with the camera moving down to street level so as to come back to the DA, Schwartz and a detective; a reframing of the three is followed by a short dialogue (Schwartz 'I don't know what Quinlan thinks she's got to do with this'/DA 'Tanya? Oh, maybe she'll cook chili for him or bring out the crystal ball'). Cut to Shot 5 of the release version (hereafter RV).

2. I h (and Table 1). Shot 26 ends with Quinlan moving to exit from Tanya's. LV has Menzies' voice off – 'Hank! Hank! Oh Hank, come on out here' – and then cuts to a shot looking from the street into Tanya's with Menzies entering and Quinlan seen from behind him coming towards the door. M begins to talk of Vargas having run into 'some kind of trouble', his explanation continuing in voice off after a cut to Shot 27 of RV (Tanya looking in the direction Q has gone).

3. Between I h and I i, LV has a scene outside Tanya's with the oil derricks in the background. Vargas tells Quinlan about the 'trouble' – the acid attack, Susan's encounter with Grandi – and Q responds with apparent and significant enmity ('Vargas *family* seems to be getting in quite a lot of trouble tonight!'). The scene is handled in some forty shots, most of them rapid cuts which render the exchange between Q (framed with Menzies in support behind him) and V (framed with the DA by his side trying to calm things down). V wants to protect 'my wife'; Q says that Susan has let herself be 'picked up' by Pancho. The final shot has Q's shadow looming gigantically on the wall of a building as out of frame he hobbles off with the aid of his cane; V in frame leaves

116 in another direction, dwarfed by the shadow. Dissolve to the first shot of I i – V crossing the street back to his hotel.

4. I i. As Grandi drives off after Vargas and Susan, LV has a dissolve to V's car on a desert road heading for the motel. A scene follows between S and V in the car: V talks about the explosion, its American/Mexican repercussions, the length of the border ('one of the longest borders on earth right here between your country and mine'); S cuddles up to him ('I could love being corny if my husband would only cooperate'/V 'Hey Suzy!'), forces him to stop for a kiss (V 'Well!'). At this point, a horn blares and a police car arrives: Schwartz gets out to tell V that Quinlan has a lead in the investigation and Menzies takes V's place to drive S to the motel, the two cars leaving in opposite directions with Menzies distraught at having forgotten to give Q his cane ('he really needs it with that game leg of his'). Grandi is then seen to be following V's car (now driven by M). Cut to II b, the scene at the construction site, then back to M and S. Spotting G, M arrests him and forces him to drive V's car (M now following behind in G's car). They arrive at the motel where S goes to her cabin and M drives off back to town with G in custody. The scene with the Night Man begins (II a) and is lengthened by additional dialogue towards the end (concerning G's arrest). Cut to II c, the police car approaching the Sanchez-Marcia apartment.

5. II e. While Vargas and Schwartz discuss the treatment Sanchez is receiving, LV has Quinlan off saying 'back in the old days we gave it to them like this . . .', followed by a thud and a groan of pain from Sanchez.

6. III h. LV has a little more conversation at the start of the scene in which Menzies finds Quinlan drinking in a bar.

7. Between III i and III j, LV has a scene in which Schwartz shows Vargas into the Hall of Records (Schwartz 'Hank Quinlan's famous intuition might still turn out to be better than yours').

8. III n. LV contains additional material at the beginning: the Night Man is seen sitting in darkness in the motel reception room and Vargas then arrives.

9. IV e (see also Table 2). LV dissolves from Menzies' face to a shot of the entrance to Tanya's seen from the street. Vargas stealthily enters, crosses from left to right, and goes up onto the sidewalk. Cut to Shot 2, Quinlan inside Tanya's staring vacantly ahead. Cut to the wall behind Quinlan: V is seen moving across (reflected in a mirror?) and the camera pans slightly to find Q who gets up looking off. Cut to the side of the room, to which Q's gaze is directed: V is seen moving across and off. Cut back to Q looking and blinking his eyes. Cut to outside Tanya's and V walking to join Menzies on the scaffolding; Shot 3 begins, here expanded with additional dialogue between the two men. (It is difficult – at least on a single viewing – to sort out the spatial coordinates of V's appearance in Tanya's and this is perhaps one reason why it was

cut; but then V's position – where he is – is precisely Q's and the narrative's problem here.) 117

There are also several places (eg IV a, IV b, IV f) where one or two very brief shots from a particular action have been cut between LV and RV.

'Film and system' was the analysis not of a film by Welles but of the filmic system of the Universal release *Touch of Evil*, the analysis, as it were, of the *terms* of the availability of the film made available. The 'original' version has no priority and the analysis stands. Leaving aside 5 (probably determined by internal censorship), the cuts speed up the film (6, 7 and 8 are straightforward examples) and prune a certain *over*-redundancy. Thus the material in 3 takes up and repeats the conflict established in the initial confrontation between Vargas and Quinlan in I d (which it resembles in setting and shooting) and prefigures (in its discussion of law and the policeman's role) the explosion of that conflict in the hotel scene in III i; thus 1 simply stresses through the DA's comment the retreat from the narrative action represented by the move into Tanya's and the sexuality which will be brought out in the Quinlan/Tanya encounter. 1, 2 and 9 lengthen the two Tanya sequences without suggesting a different balance between them (Menzies' entry in 2 to fetch Quinlan whom he then supports against Vargas strengthens the rhyme of his entry in the second sequence for Vargas against Quinlan). 4 is the most interesting in that it encloses and repeats, underlines, the division of Susan and Vargas – a border separates them and once again they kiss on that border to be immediately separated; the marriage remains unconsummated, Vargas readily abandons kiss, Susan and car which will be returned to him at the end of the film in precisely reverse order. Susan is left out, isolated in the motel in the middle of nowhere – general shots lay out the vast empty space – to which she is driven by Vargas, by Menzies (for Quinlan), by Grandi, each taking the place of the other.

Rosenbaum concludes that the longer version makes the plot 'more legible', 'a lot more lucid'. Certainly details are explained (4 provides Menzies with an opportunity to explain how Quinlan stopped a bullet for him), but there is nothing to pick up such narrative discrepancies as the taking of the photograph in I e. The longer version says things again but no *more*. The lucidity and legibility of the system was what I tried to demonstrate in its movements, its frictions, and is what the additional material *and its deletion* confirm: the longer version and the release version match exactly but the latter condenses – and itself demonstrates in that very condensation – the system shared by both; as witness, for instance, its cutting from Night Man to the hand on the Linneker detonator, its dissolve from Menzies to Tanya – everywhere, in fact, the charge of its elliptical *speed of exchange*.

Dear Editors,

There are a number of errors of fact and of emphasis in my article, 'The American Photo League,' *Screen* v 13 n 4 (Winter 1972-3),* that it would be important to point out.

Most important is the question of the Film and Photo League's orientation and membership. On p 109 I suggest that 'the degree to which the League was a worker's organisation is not clear'. There follows a list of 'its claimed advisors or associates' that suggests the League's direction came from these people. On the basis of further investigation and the opportunity of seeing many of the League's films (they were not available when I first wrote this material), it seems clear that the League's membership was predominantly working class and that its actual work was more totally involved in political issues than many of the written reports I had consulted, with their strong emphasis on theoretical problems, would suggest. In a letter to me, Tom Brandon, a former New York Workers' Film and Photo League member, notes that 'the rank and file members were perhaps 75 per cent working people, probably half white collar and half blue collar, about 20 per cent students and maybe 5 per cent or less middle class. . . .'

Having seen League films such as 'Workers Newsreel No 12', 'The Ford Massacre', and 'America Today', there seems little question but that the primary focus was working class struggle, captured by cameras whose point of view often matches that of the participants (marchers, strikers, union members, etc). In retrospect, the incorrect emphasis in my article seems a result of not having had access to the films and relying upon published commentary of the more articulate participants whose writing may have stressed different issues than those manifest in their actual film work.

Also, the account of the fate of the League and its most well-known members suffers from a limited discussion of changing conditions in the United States during the 1940's and 1950's, particularly the effect of World War II and the Cold War upon the left. As a result the account drifts toward a kind of psychologism

* This issue of *Screen* is now out of print.

that attributes changes in orientation and practice to the shifting motivations of these members more or less independently of circumstances. Most of these attributions seemed justified from the written articles, but this written material is not an adequate explanation, especially in relation to questions regarding the rank-and-file membership. 119

Some other, more factual points are: the documentary listed as 'Taxi - a feature length film' was, in fact, a short film (with no relation to the 1932 feature called *Taxi*); *Ernest Thaelmann* was originally titled *Free Thaelmann!* The film credited to Joris Ivens on p 114 should be *The Power and the Land* (1940) and not *The Land*.

Nykino, a group discussed on p 112, did not merge with the New York Workers' Film and Photo League, nor did the New Film Alliance or Frontier Films evolve directly from these earlier groups. What they had in common were some of the same members, but their programmes and policies were not a result of steady evolution. (Nykino, for example, had an experimental approach to film form while the League worked primarily with a newsreel format.) The Film and Photo League was a catalytic influence for these later groups and the audience support groups that also developed, but there is no direct lineage between these different organisations.

Many questions still remain, among them the broad problem of historical placement - the relationship of the League to the left at large and the Communist Party, in America and internationally, to the 'real conditions of existence' among working people in the 1930's, the ideological impediments to the recognition of these conditions and the specific role the Film and Photo League and other groups played in attempting to bring about that recognition and subsequent action. I understand that Tom Brandon is completing a book covering this period from his perspective as an active member of many of these groups. Its publication should facilitate further research into one of the missing chapters in film history.

Sincerely yours,
BILL NICHOLS

Dear Sir,

The article on the history and ideology of film lighting by Peter Baxter in *Screen* v 16 n 3 (Autumn 1975) is full of factual error, and should be set right before it is treated as gospel by would-be students of the subject. The flaws in it arise from the fact that it has largely been stitched together from secondary sources written long after the event which are completely unreliable, particularly Vardac and MacGowan. Unfortunately in the field of film tech-

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120 niques even the primary sources such as the memoirs of various cameramen have to be used with great care and checked against inspections of the films of the period and also against a knowledge of the performance of the lights, cameras, etc that were used then. (Balshofer and Miller's *Two Reels a Week* does not contain any actual errors, but it is very vague about exactly when various important things were done and how they were done. Charles Higham's *The Hollywood Cameramen* contains a number of wild and false claims, particularly touching on 'North light'.) An outline of film lighting developments up to 1917 based on the examination of many hundreds of American films is now available in *Film Form* v 1 n 1 (January 1976) and will be illustrated by National Film Theatre seasons in the near future, but a number of additional points need to be made in connection with the article by Peter Baxter.

The scene in *The Seven Ages* (Porter, 1905) illuminated solely by a fire effect light is not achieved with reflected sunlight as Kemp Niver claims; inspection of the frame print shows *diverging* sharp-edged shadows which can only have been achieved with an arc light in the fire place. (Even when reflected, sunlight forms a parallel beam.) Even the well-known *Rescued by Rover* of 1905 shows the use of arc flood-lights in one scene; the light coming through the window of the kidnapper's garret room is produced by a pair of arcs. The same general lighting set-up and effect is almost exactly reproduced in Griffith's *Edgar Allen Poe* of 1909. In fact Bitzer never really learned how to use arc lights, and this is the reason he had to be totally removed from behind the camera by 1920, although kept on the credits and the payroll. The place to look for the most advanced lighting of the pre-First-World-War period is in the films of the Vitagraph Company, one of the largest at that time, and one whose films were widely seen in Europe.

In their *Oliver Twist* of 1909, although most of the scenes are lit with the usual flattish general light from diffused daylight and Cooper-Hewitts, one of the scenes in the orphanage is lit with strongly directional light from eye-level at one side, and in Fagin's den an arc flood-light placed just out of frame left near the floor casts a looming shadow (though a weak grey one) on the wall when Fagin happens to be in the bottom left corner of the frame. There is of course a flattish overall illumination as well in this scene, but in 1910 one can point to the readily available *Love's Awakening* from Vitagraph in which the second scene in the lawyer's office is lit almost entirely by a group of arc flood-lights placed front right somewhat below eye-level, and these naturally produce strong figure modelling with a good fall-off of brightness towards the background that results in fairly good figure separation. These tendencies were developed in the next two years in many, though not all, of the Vitagraph Films, and by 1912 one can see for instance, in *Conscience*, the kind of figure modelling, from a key

arc flood-light above eye-level front right plus another side left to produce fill and some figure separation, the kind of figure modelling then that needs only the addition of back-lighting to be fully developed American-style lighting. Back-lighting begins to be visible in one scene in *Just a Shabby Doll* (Thanhouse, 1913), probably achieved with an arc flood-light side back. By this year extensive use of arc lighting had spread to many American film companies, and heavy chiaroscuro effect can be seen in a number of films made 1912-13, even going as far as true low-key lighting (*The Man He Might Have Been*, Vitagraph, 1913), and location interiors entirely lit by arc-lights (*Hearts and Coronets*, Vitagraph, 1912).

In other words, all the basic features of American film lighting were developed and working before the De Mille-Wyckoff association of 1914 onwards, and what is more, the kind of figure lighting and modelling described above was different from anything that could be achieved on the stage, because there one cannot put a group of arc flood-lights ten feet front right of the actors without being in mid-air above the orchestra pit. This is not to say that there was no connection with lighting as practised on the New York stage at the beginning of the century, particularly as regards effect lighting, just that Baxter is both inadequate and incorrect on this interesting question.

As far as European film lighting is concerned, the most advanced work was unquestionably being done in Denmark prior to the First World War, and the model chosen for departure around 1910 was again that of the Vitagraph films. Danish lighting of 1911-12 occasionally got slightly ahead of what was being done in America at the same time, but by 1913 the European tendency in lighting as it was to remain was becoming apparent. This involved lighting the whole shot as one unit, not giving separate lighting to the figures, and particularly not taking up back-lighting of the figures with arc spot-lights as gradually became usual in America during the war years. One might mention *The Mysterious X* (Christiansen, 1913) and *The Evangelist* (Hoiger Madsen, 1914) as Danish examples.

All these crucial developments in film lighting seem much too early to have been influenced by Gordon Craig and Appia's writings, whatever effect these may have had on the theatre at a later date. It is important to remember that Appia was responsible for no publically shown production before 1912, and in 1910 he was such an obscure figure that Edward Gordon Craig had not heard of him, and that Craig's few productions before 1912 had extremely short runs, and were very small scale except for *The Pretenders* and *Much Ado About Nothing* of 1903 which were commercial disasters. Hardly the kind of thing to excite the interest of the American theatre. As far as Belasco is concerned it would be very interesting to know exactly what he was doing with lighting at the turn of the century, and how he was doing it, but Baxter does

122 not tell us. Just like Belasco, Craig and Appia's intentions were also, amongst other things, to give their audiences the pleasure of experiencing a gamut of emotions in a few hours.

The vague quotation from Moderwell's book written in 1927 establishes nothing specific whatsoever about what was being done with stage lighting in 1914, in America, much as one might like to know. But whatever it was, it was too late for it to influence the path that American film lighting was already set upon. Peter Baxter is also confused about flickering arc-lights, though his sources are not. Stroboscopic flicker between the camera shutter and AC arcs may have been a problem for Bitzer and the young Karl Brown, but the people making the films mentioned above had solved this problem by 1905. The flicker that the Geraldine Farrar quote refers to is the occasional flicker or extinction that can happen in the middle of a shot right through up to the present day when using a number of arcs to light a scene.

Similar confusions and errors mar an earlier article in *Screen* by John Ellis on Ealing Studios (v 16 n 1, Spring 1975). In the section devoted to studio technology the data given on cameras, though irrelevant as will be shown below, is nevertheless inaccurate. Ellis confuses shutter speed and film speed; the Eyemo had variable film speed from 8 to 48 fps just as did the Cameflex. A fixed shutter speed places no restriction on standard filming as long as a set of neutral density filters are available, which they were, and hardly any even if they are not. The Eyemo is also lighter than the Cameflex in its normal configuration (about 12 lbs as against 14 lbs, both loaded) and a lot smaller, as anyone who has seen these cameras would be aware. Ellis fails to mention the Newman-Sinclair camera, very portable at 17 lbs (the familiar modern 16BL and NPR are heavier) and capable of taking through two minutes of film at a winding. This last camera was more used on British sound features for location filming than the Eyemo, and with both of them it would have been quite possible to make location-filmed, *post-synchronised* features just like the Italian neo-realist films, if the desire to do so had existed. It is worth adding that the Eyemo was used on American features on odd occasions from the middle 1920's, even hand-held, and could provide perfectly satisfactory images from the studio point of view.

As far as camera movements are concerned, steerable dollies and even a crane were available at Ealing, and were used on *Secret People* to execute complex camera movements. Ellis seems to be unaware that in Hollywood at the same time, that is at the end of the 1940's, exactly the same standard equipment was being used in a large number of films to produce a frenzy of long takes with complicated camera movements without too much difficulty (Wyler, Minnelli, Preminger, Goulding, and many others). It may take the better part of a day to set up and rehearse a two-minute take, but when it has been shot, that is a day's worth of

screen time achieved. The average Average Shot Length of Hollywood films went up by nearly 50 per cent from the late 1930's to the late 1940's (1934 to 1939: 8.5 sec, 1940 to 1945: 10.5 sec, 1946 to 1951: 12.5 sec), and Hitchcock was very late joining in the trend, though going further than anyone else. In fact the shooting time for *Rope* (23 days) was below average for a major Hollywood feature, which gives some indication that long-take shooting is not necessarily inefficient. 123

Michael Balcon did not say that shooting in colour was always more efficient on location, but that it was *sometimes*. To shoot *dialogue* location scenes with a lighting quality that matched the studio-shot scenes, which was *always* the aim at that time, required more lighting equipment than for monochrome, because the colour stock was more contrasty and so required higher levels of fill light.

Summing up, one can say that the constraints of film technology on film forms are far less than is currently supposed, though not negligible, and as for ideology, its connection with film technology is practically zero. The Russians use cameras that are copies of the Mitchell and the Cameflex (the Moskva EC 32 and Kohbac), and the Chinese use old Mitchells to shoot their feature films, and neither has shown the slightest interest in producing special non-bourgeois distorting lenses for filming. Curiously enough it is only among the Western capitalist avant-garde élite that whole films have been shot with unnatural perspective distortions, for instance Sidney Peterson's *The Lead Shoes*.

Yours faithfully,

BARRY SALT

We are very grateful to Barry Salt for his correction of a number of errors in the articles by Peter Baxter and John Ellis, and for the provision of valuable new information on the same subject. However, neither errors nor information justify the dismissive tone of his comments or the dogmatic rejection of ideological effectivity in his last sentences. Ellis's theses are little affected by Salt's corrections. Baxter's argument was that lighting in the American cinema developed from an original flat style to one that endows the screen with volume and individuating significance, the latter becoming the dominant style in the 1920's. This latter style combined elements from two developments of stage lighting: naturalistic, exemplified by Belasco, and symbolic, exemplified by Craig and Appia, and it found a justification in a religious theory of light with insistent references to seventeenth century Dutch painting. Style and reference conform to the whole system of American narrative cinema established in the 1920's, which, with its insistence on meaning, might be described precisely as 'sym-

124 *bolic-naturalistic*'. In his letter (but not so unequivocally in his Film Form article), Salt argues that these developments (which he does not dispute) should be dated to work by Vitagraph from 1909-12 rather than to the Wyckoff-DeMille partnership of 1914 on. He does not think Craig and Appia could have had much influence in America by that date, and anyway, these developments use lighting arrangements incompatible with stage practice. Salt's remarks hardly settle the question of the extent of knowledge of Craig and Appia in America in these years; however, the point is not to establish a genealogy of inventions and influences, but to show that a particular lighting style is one of a set of conventions which in combination have certain ideological effects, and that this style emerged under the aegis of notions about the artistic use of light that reflect these effects. Salt's strictures in his letter are thus largely beside the point; in his article in Film Form he offers (implicitly) a different overall view of film conventions and their early history which does contradict Baxter's and Ellis's approach – but that is another argument.

THE EDITOR

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